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A HOME WEEKLY FOR WINTER NIGHTS AND SUMMER DAYS.

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No. 305.

DEATH'S MISSION.

BY HARVEY HOWARD.

Oh, why should summer roses fade
Before the winter's breath?
Why should the lilies low be laid
By nature's law of death?
Why does the cypress delicate
Lose all its grace and die?
The gladiolus so elate
With moldered splendor lie?
The modest primrose, and the fern
So cool and fresh and fair,
The warm geranium of the urn—
Why are they rotting there?
Ah! wise the hand that slays the flower
Which we have learned to slight,
That flings the pall of winter o'er
The summer's creatures bright.
Only, when once again we long
The blossom sweet to know,
Or hear the vanished robin's song,
The streamlet's laughing flow,
To give new life unto the dead,
Awake the winter-slain,
Bring back the blessings that are fled,
And give us joy again.

Happy Harry,

THE WILD BOY OF THE WOODS;
OR,
The Pirates of the Northern Lakes.

BY OLL COOMES.

AUTHOR OF "IDAHO TOM," "DAKOTA DAN,"
"BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HURRICANE,"
"HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WATER SPIRIT'S RETURN.

We will not attempt to describe what followed the capture of Long Beard, Margery and Captain Rankin. They were all bound and carried away to the boats, the women in a state of total unconsciousness.

Kirby Kale searched the cabin through and through as if for something which he particularly wanted. He ransacked every box, nook and corner in the house. In a small chest in a bedroom he found an infant's clothes and some playthings all carefully folded and laid away. A sigh, then an oath escaped the lips of the ruthless plunderer when his eyes fell upon the infantile garments and trinkets. With set teeth and clenched fists he sat and gazed upon them, his thoughts reverting to the dim past. Then, as a mist gathered in the sinful man's eyes, that hard, wicked look on his face softened; his soul seemed smothered under the remorseless reproaches of a guilty conscience.

Finally he dashed everything aside and with a violent oath strode out of the building. Just across the threshold he stopped, when he saw that his men had all gone to the boats with the dead, wounded and prisoners. Terror seized upon him when he found that he was alone in the gloomy night. He trembled—his teeth chattered and his soul cowered. Then that terrible death-warning, that strange "chirp" rang startlingly upon the air. With a bound the English officer reached the darkness, as a bullet out through the space where he had stood a moment before.

He ran with all speed, urged on by the phantom of vengeance, down to the boats, where he found the men in a passion of fury over the loss of every ear left on the boats. This loss delayed their retreat all of an hour—until oars could be extemporized from boards torn from the out-buildings.

In the mean time Happy Harry was busy. Having stole about, putting in a deadly shot now and then, until he saw that his aid was of no further avail to his friends, he turned, and hurrying down to the boats, removed and concealed every oar.

Then he crept back into the bushes and waited until the soldiers had emerged from the cabin with their captives. Fearing, however, that there might be others in the cabin, he waited several minutes, when, true enough, a man appeared in the doorway. He recognized the form by its outline as that of Kirby Kale. Raising his rifle, and giving utterance to his warning cry, he fired, with the result already seen.

Satisfied that the house was deserted, he crept up to the door and entered. All around gave evidence of the dreadful struggle; the ruin was complete—that home was indeed desolate. With a heavy heart he turned to go out, when Belshazzar uttered a low growl and crouched in the doorway as if about to spring upon something in the darkness without. Harry's first thought was that one of the soldiers had returned to the cabin. He glanced out into the night; all was gloom; but a voice from out the darkness came:

"Doggy, will you bite—here, fellow," it said, in a low, musical tone, tremulous with fear.

"Be still, Belshazzar!" commanded the youth, and his dog rose from his couchant position and turned aside.

Then the darkness seemed to part, and from between the walls of gloom a light appeared—the light of a sweet, angelic face. A young girl of sixteen crossed the threshold and confronted the boy.

In speechless wonder he stood and regarded the maiden, who, running her eyes about the room and seeing its disorder, cried out:

"Oh, where are my friends?"

Harry knew her now—the maiden called Tempy, who had gone to Colonel Miller with Captain Rankin's dispatches.



A young girl of sixteen crossed the threshold and confronted the boy.

"I'm sorry—very sorry to say," the lad replied, recovering from his momentary embarrassment, "that the English soldiers took your friends away to their brig."

"Oh, my poor papa! my poor sister!—it will kill them, kill them!" she cried, wringing her little hands in a paroxysm of grief.

"Little woman," said the youth, with rude galantry, "I believe I know who you are. I heard your sister Margery tell Long Beard that Tempy had gone off with some dispatches to the headquarters of some colonel, and I guess you're the girl, are you not?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Well, you see I'm Happy Harry, and am down here with the governor—that's Long Beard. I'm a friend of his'n and done all I could to keep them pisen English from capturin' them. But it wasn't no use. They come too many, and bustin' the door down, bolted in. But I tell you, Miss, a hornet stung a few of them red-coats as they won't hear another buzz this side of the judgment day. I've been the very edge of despair—a brink of eternity to several of 'em, and I can just fight for you like a nest of hornets. And that ole dog, Belshazzar, 'll fight for an angel any time; but, as we're not overly safe here, Miss Temple, we'd better get away from here. Them soul-corrupted English are on this island yet, and are liable to drop in on us at any moment."

"And what became of the young captain—Mr. Rankin, whom I left here?"

"He was taken with the others."

"Taken!—where to?"

"Them English are soldiers, and just off the Pleiads to the north, they've got a small brig-of-war, and it's to that vessel they'll take your friends."

Tempy's eyes filled with tears and her slender form shook with deep emotion. Her tears touched Harry's heart, for his lips quivered, he sighed heavily, and turning aside, he drew his hand across his eyes, and said in a half-choked voice:

"Come, Temple, we'd better get out of here into the night, afore them varmints find you're here, or all creation will be overturned to git you."

"I have friends near here," Tempy replied.

"We heard firing in the vicinity of the house as we approached the island, and as I was acquainted with every foot of the ground, I insisted on their allowing me to creep up and see what was the matter, for fear of some trap."

"Who are your friends?"

"An escort of soldiers under Lieutenant Reeder of Colonel Miller's command."

"The great, hoppin' hornets! you don't say! Why, I'm just at home with them fellows, Tempy, I am, for a munificent fact. I know every mother's boy of 'em better'n a book. Just lead the way to whar they be; I want to grapple with 'em."

Tempy led the way from the cabin, along a dim path through the undergrowth—down to the beach where seven men, in the uniform of United States soldiers, were waiting.

"My friends are all taken captives," sobbed Tempy, as they approached the men.

"Indeed! It is too bad, but I see you are not alone," said one of the men, whose voice Happy Harry recognized as that of Lieutenant Philip Reeder.

"No sir; she's not alone, Lieutenant Reeder," the youth answered, stepping forward.

"Happy Harry, the Wild Boy!" exclaimed the soldiers.

Lieutenant Reeder grasped the youth's hand, and shaking it warmly, asked:

"What's the trouble here, Harry? Have the English got this far down?"

"You mean this fur up, don't you?—up from Satan's dominions?"

"Well, have it as you please, but what's the trouble?"

Harry narrated all that had transpired on the island during the night. The soldiers, completely astonished by his story, knew not what course to pursue, so turned to Harry for suggestion.

"Horats!" exclaimed the youth, "if my say'd do the work, I'd say exterminate the Englishers and Indians, overrun Canada, and take possession of the province and run it in our own private interests. But, as we're only a few, we'd better do the best we can."

"Well, what can we do? that's the question."

"Let me see," said the boy, scratching his head, reflectively. "I guess we'd better hide this little angel here on the island, then we'll take to the lake, row down towards the brig, and see what we can do about takin' possession of the institution."

"Preposterous!" exclaimed Lieutenant Reeder.

"That's nothin' onpossible, Lieutenant Phil. I once heard of a man that surrounded a hull squad of men and captured 'em. Why, it's nothin' after you git used to it once. When you git to be an ole veteran like me, you'll buckle right up and attack a cannon, and if it ain't loaded you may carry the works. And so it is with the brig; if we'll spruce right up to her, we may capture her, providin' her crew is not aboard."

"Oh, certainly; but that is not likely to be."

"It is, Lieutenant, likely to be," returned Harry; "you see, the dogged thing war afraid to run down here among the islands and bars without takin' soundin's, and so they anchored up thar and sent a boat down here to reconnoiter; but, 'twixt me and Belshazzar, we managed to extract their boat out from under 'em, and then I talked out of my long-ranged mouth to 'em, when click, click, whang—che-bang went their ole muskets into the gloomy night. These sounds made them up at the brig think a battle was goin' on, so down to the islands come another boat-load of English buzzards, and after a while here come another, and so I don't think there were many left at the big boat. All of a score of men came down, and I can't see what more'n that's a-doin' aboard a little affair like that brig. But, say there are five left: I believe we can git in ahead of them 'as have been here, and sail the brig and her crew. I do for a monstrous fact."

"But those that were here may be at the brig ere this."

"Nary brig; they're on this island yet—at the tother end, huntin' for oars to paddle their ole shebangs with. You see, I abstracted the oars from their boats when they were at the cabin raisin' hob, and dog my cats! I didn't forget to put 'em back; and it's caused a botchered delay to 'em sweet-scented royalists. If they git to the boat in the next two hours they'll do well, and so we might try to take the brig in out of the way, and if we manage things right, we might cabbage a few of the crew. I'll take a little canoe layin' right around there and lead the way to within hailin' distance of the brig, when you can stop, and I'll go on and git aboard the British renegade and find out how many men's aboard of her. If thar's two or three or such a matter, I'll give a whistle, and then you bear proudly down upon us and board the brig."

"That is easier proposed than executed, Harry," said Lieutenant Reeder.

"Great, hoppin' hornets, yes! in course it is easier to do the talk than the work, Lieutenant. But then, we must always lay our plans and work up to 'em. Now, that brig, Lieutenant, is not goin' to be fool enough to pull up and No sir; we've got to go up there and lam thunder outen her crew of red-coats, and in course we've got to get up and buzz. Here's seven of you and one of me, that's eight. Belshazzar 'll leave with Miss Temple. Well, eight is a good force. Every Yankee is eke to three Britishers; that makes eight times three, which is forty-four—forty-four red-coats that we can whip. Just think of it, Lieutenant Reeder! But then, what's the use talkin' its only wastin' time. If you won't go with me, I believe I'll run up alone and try the brig a jolt or two. I've done jist as foolish a thing as to attack a man-of-war, and come out top canine, I have for an extended fact. It's all in luck; one can't tell what he can do till he tries. But, what do you say, Lieutenant—go or stay?"

Lieutenant Reeder was a soldier, but he had no practical experience in the field, therefore he used more discretion about venturing into unknown dangers than the "old veteran" who has been under fire, as it were. He was slow and cautious—brave, but not venturesome; however, he could not stand still, and hear a boy—a mere child—like Happy Harry, begging for his assistance in an undertaking which he declared he would attempt alone, if not aided. Therefore the officer consented to his proposition, and at once prepared for departure.

Tempy was concealed in a clump of bushes, and Belshazzar left to protect her. She was somewhat reluctant about remaining behind; but when apprised of the danger to which she would be exposed in case she accompanied them, she yielded to her friends' desire—praying that success might crown the expedition and lead to the rescue of her father and sister.

The soldiers at once embarked in their own boat—a six-oared barge, creeping away through the darkness after the indomitable Happy Harry, who, in a small canoe, headed toward the brig-of-war.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"BRIG AHOY!"

ALTHOUGH Lieutenant Reeder's boat was, as stated, provided with three pairs of oars, that was scarce able to keep up with the little craft manned by Happy Harry. The darkness was somewhat against the lieutenant's party; but by careful watching they were enabled to keep the Wild Boy in sight. In this manner they traveled nearly a league, when the young borderman dropped alongside their boat, and said:

"Boys, do you see that light off here—aways?"

"Yes," was the general response.

"That's her—that jade of a brig; things appears still, too. In course, they're anchored there with their rags of sail taken in to wait for 'fair weather and fair wind.' But, boys, if we find the sullen-browed rip deserted by all but one or two, she won't be a circumstance to us. And if we git her, we'll weigh anchor, spread skirts and send her promenading over the lake like Julia Fipps racks it off for style down to Cornfield Corner. Now, boys, I'm goin' to pull straight for the English hussey, and if I git aboard without gettin' perforated with a composition of metals kicked from a

ten-pound cannon, and find the English lady deserted, or nighly so, I'll whistle Cap'n Kidd smartly, and then you come on down and board her. I'll direct you then, and if we're likely to have a fight, you shell know it in due season. So now hold your tongues and keep yourselves ready to march at the tap of the drum."

The next instant Happy Harry was gone. The darkness grew more intense. Nothing around could be seen save the occasional flash of a light on board the brig. All was silent but the ripple of the waves circling outward from the wake of Harry's boat.

In dire suspense, Lieutenant Reeder and his men waited the movements of the young adventurer.

Boldly the youth pushed across the water and alongside the brig. A voice hailed him, and he answered:

"Who are you?" demanded the watch on the brig.

"Nobody but a small specimen of a boy," replied Harry, boldly, in his reckless, whimsical way of speaking.

"What are you doing here, then?" again demanded the watch.

"Why, I'm run away from home, and call myself Captain Kidd, and I'm out sailin' on the sea. I'm a pirate—that's what I am, come to think; and jigger my buttons if I don't believe I'll board you. Got any treasure?—surrender, or I'll open fire on you!"

"Keep your mouth shut, or I'll put a bullet through your pate!" was the response of a gruff, savage voice, that came from above. It was the captain of the brig who spoke so authoritatively.

"Whew!" whistled Harry, softly, "he's a regular ole blusterin' hurricane. Spect he'll knock me baldheaded when I git within his reach, but, bless if I go back without first pacin' the deck of this old galavantin' tub. Say, up there," and he spoke in a suppressed tone, "would you have any objections to takin' me aboard?"

Without further parleying, Harry was taken aboard the brig and straightway conducted to the captain's room, which was lit up by the dim rays of a lantern.

The captain was a true type of the English bully, with dark, morose, and savage features. His form was short and stout and clothed in a naval uniform, that lent an additional air to his blustering bravado.

He received Harry with a fierce, searching glance, and a disdainful toss of the round, bullet-head, while the lad, hat in one hand and rifle in the other, bowed humbly to the soldier of the sea.

"Humph!" sneered the officer, "a blasted little Yankee! Who sent you here, sir?"

"Who?" ejaculated Harry, in apparent astonishment; "why, commodore, nobody. I'm a young rover-boy—I'm a pirate—I'm Captain Kidd, I am, for a fact."

"You're a young idiot, that's what you are. Your looks tell me that. But, sir, tell me whether you heard that firing off among the islands awhile ago?"

"I reckon I'm not deaf, 'when I sail, when I sail,'" was the laconic reply.

"Don't you know something about that disturbance over there?"

"Nothin' worth mentionin', commodore," innocently.

"Don't lie to me, boy, or I'll put this blade through your body," said the captain, drawing his sword.

"Great hoppin' hornets, commodore! don't murder me, 'when I sail, when I sail,' for I am speakin' the truth as fur as I possibly can."

"How long has it been since you left the shore?" demanded the captain, still fiercely.

"Several days ago, and I never expect to return again. I don't like the shore, general. It's not the place for a pirate. I like the salt, salty sea, with its howlin' ole breakers and waves and treasure. Oh, I'm a bully old pirate, and never goin' home again till I git a shipload of gold. Hurray for Captain Kidd, the rover of the sea!" and he gave utterance to a shout that might have been heard a mile, and which raised the ire of the British captain to such a pitch that he seized the youth by the collar and shook him savagely.

"Didn't I tell you to keep still?" he roared.

"And didn't I tell you I was a pirate?"

The officer slapped him in the face. He colored deeply, but in his usual good-natured way, replied:

"Great hornets, commodore! you're a rough old salt—rough as a wounded buck. A buck, general, when he gets wounded, is an awful old butter. I war out huntin' with my dear old god-father, Davy Darrett, when he shot and hurt a lammin' big buck. The animal keeled over for dead, and Davy shouldered arms and marched up to tap the critter's throat; when, whar should that buck do but jump up, face Davy, shake his head that way"—and Harry illustrated the movement by taking off his hat, lowering his head, and shaking it fiercely. "Then," he continued, "the buck started to rids Davy this way, and slap he took Davy in the paunch, that way," and with all the force of a young bull, Harry drove his head into the plethoric stomach of the unsuspecting officer, who went down like a log, completely breathless.

Quicker than a flash Harry snatched the key from the lock on the door of the room, and running outside, locked the captain in. Hurriedly ascending to the deck, the youth uttered two or three shrill whistles that were immediately answered from out the darkness.

"What does this mean?" asked the watch, approaching Harry.

"It means that I'm Captain Kidd, the pirate, and that I'm master of this brig."

The mate drew his short sword, but, before he could use it, Harry dealt him a blow that laid him prostrate upon the deck.

Five minutes later Lieutenant Reeder and his men were aboard the brig. Before the mate had fully recovered, he was bound and gagged. Then they descended to the captain's quarters, unlocked the door and pushed it open. Like a hurricane the enraged skipper started toward the door in blind fury, but the muzzles of seven American rifles caused him to recoil with surprise and horror. It required but a moment to convince him of the situation, and he sheathed his sword in token of submission. He was at once bound and gagged, and locked in the room.

This success suggested a second stroke, and arrangements were made for the reception of Long Beard's captors. Each man took his position to await their arrival. A deathlike stillness settled over the brig. That dim light still hung in the rigging, a guide to those on the dark waters.

Half an hour went by.

Still those eight shadowy forms on deck wait and watch with bated breath. Suddenly the dip of oars breaks upon their ears—the boats are coming!

The Americans nerve themselves for the ordeal. A severe struggle is imminent. Hither and thither, like a dusky shadow, flits Harry, trying to catch a glimpse of the boats.

One of them soon came alongside the brig. The murmur of voices could be distinctly heard below. In a few moments five soldiers ascended from their barge to the brig's deck, with three captives in custody. The guard was conducting its prisoners across deck, when eight forms rose up before and around the English with leveled rifles, and a voice cried out:

"S'tender, every mother's brat of you!"

It was the voice of the Wild Boy of the Woods.

The English, so lately flushed with victory, were stricken almost speechless. They saw at a glance that the brig had been captured, and not knowing how many of the enemy were aboard, surrendered without a word.

And Long Beard, Margery and Captain Rankin were free again!

"Harry, Harry, my boy, is this your work?" asked the giant, advancing to his side and laying his hand upon the lad's head.

"Well, not all of it, general. I done some figurin', a bit of fightin', more rumm' and sculkin', and finally came to with my head in the grub basket of this brig's pussy old captain, and I—"

"Sh! hark!" cautioned Reeder, "the other boat is coming."

True enough, the other boat could be heard approaching, and it is quite probable that its crew would have met the fate of the first boat, had it not been for one thing—the first mate succeeded in getting his mouth free, when at the top of his lungs he shouted forth a thunderous warning to his friends.

Lieutenant Reeder sprang forward and demanded the surrender of the party, which was already within hailing distance; but the crew, seeing the trap into which their friends had fallen, resolved to avert a similar fate, and turning their boat, fled away over the water.

This left the brig in the undisputed possession of the Americans, and without a dissenting voice it was declared the prize of Happy Harry.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHERE WAS SHE?

THE captive crew of the "Scout," this being the name of the little brig, was at once securely bound and lodged below deck. Then attention was given to Captain Rankin, who was still suffering severely from his wounds and late captivity. He was placed in comfortable quarters and his wounds attended to with all the surgical skill and tenderness that those around him possessed. The faithful Margery, although a sufferer herself from the mental tortures and horrors of her late captivity, rendered every kindness in her power to make those around her comfortable.

Long Beard, fortunately, was an old sailor, and made himself at home aboard the brig. To him all now turned for further directions, and he suggested that, as the wind was favorable, they weigh anchor and make for a southern port.

"But, look a-here, general," said Harry, "couldn't you be induced to drop down to your island and see if all's right there?"

"I care nothing about the island, Harry. When my children are safe, then I may look after our home."

"But, see here, Big Beard, I've news for you," replied the youth; "an angel flattered down onto that island after you were captured, and she said her name was Temple, and that she was your gal."

"Harry, you're jesting now."

"I can prove it; these soldiers came with her."

"It is so, stranger," affirmed Lieutenant Reeder.

"Then, of course, I will stop at the island for her; but how does it come that she is back so soon?"

"I will tell you," answered Reeder. "Colonel Miller sent me out with eight men to reconnoiter the coast, some fifty miles north of the fort, and fortunately met your daughter. When we made ourselves known, she told us where she was going and for what purpose. I offered to relieve her of the dangerous journey, when she gave up the dispatches and I sent two men in her boat back to the post with them, while I took her into our boat and brought her back to the island. We landed a few minutes after your capture."

"Thank Heaven! thank Heaven! Then Tempy is safe, too," said the old father, joyfully. "Yes, of course we'll touch the island and take her aboard. Did you leave Tempy alone?"

"Yes," replied Reeder; "we dare not weaken our little force a single man. We thought if we made sure of the brig, all would be well otherwise, and if we failed and were ourselves captured, she would be safe. That's why we left her alone on the island."

"Allow me, lieutenant," said Harry, politely, "to say that Miss Temple are *not* alone. My dog, Belsnazzar, are with her, and you know, general, that that's as much as to say that half a dozen mighty good men guarded her. Bell will fight as long as he's able to wag his tail, and so I think we'll find the young angel all right."

"Then we will move at once."

It required but a few minutes to weigh anchor, hoist sail and put the brig in motion. The giant, assisted by the soldiers, manned the little craft with remarkable skill, and in an hour's time they stood off the island—the home of Long Beard.

A boat was lowered, and Harry and a cou-

ple of soldiers were sent ashore for Tempy. They were gone nearly two hours, and when they returned they were accompanied only by the youth's dog, which bore many bloody marks—evidence of a terrible encounter with a terrible foe.

But Tempy—she was not to be found—she was gone from the island!

(To be continued—commenced in No. 301.)

LET IT PASS.

Be not swift to take offence;

Let it pass!

Anger is a foe to sense;

Let it pass!

Brood not darkly o'er a wrong,

Which will disappear ere long;

Rather sing this cheery song—

Let it pass!

If for good you've taken ill;

Let it pass!

Oh! be kind and gentle still;

Let it pass!

Time at last makes all things straight;

Let us not resent but wait,

And our triumph will be great;

Let it pass!

Erminie:

THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,

AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AN AWFUL MYSTERY," "VICTORIA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXX.

MISS LAWLESS IN DIFFICULTIES.

"The hypocrite had left his mask, and stood in naked ugliness. He was a man who stole the lives of the court of Heaven To serve the devil in."

—POLLOCK.

THREE hours after his interview and rejection by Erminie, Judge Lawless alighted at the inn-door in Judestown. The obsequious landlord came out all bows and smiles to greet the grand seigneur of this rustic town, and ushered him into the parlor with as much, and considerably more, respect than he would have shown to the king of England, had that gentleman condescended to visit the "Judestown House," as the flaming gilt sign-board announced it to be.

"Glass wine, sir! brandy water, sir! s'gar, sir! anything you want, sir?" insinuated mine host, all in a breath.

"No, my good man, I want nothing," said the judge, with a pompous wave of his jeweled hand; "I have come on important business this afternoon. Is there a somewhat dissipated character, a sailor, called Black—Black—really I—"

"Bart, sir? Yes, sir. Here five minutes 'go, sir," breathlessly out in the landlord.

"Ah!" said the judge, slowly, passing his hand over his mustache; "can you find him for me? I wish to see him. I have reason to believe he can give me some information concerning those smugglers who of late have alarmed the good people around here so much."

"Yes, sir; hunt him up five minutes, sir." And off hustled the host of the Judestown House in search of Black Bart.

Judge Lawless arose with knitted brows and began pacing excitedly up and down the room, when alone. He knew this Black Bart well, knew all about the smugglers, too, as his well-stocked cellar could testify. Judge Lawless found them very useful in various ways, and having a remarkably elastic conscience at his own, was troubled with no scruples about cheating the revenue, so long as his wine-bin was well supplied. But this was abduction—something more dangerous, something that required all his wounded self-love, and disappointed passion, and intense mortification to give him courage for. But his plans were formed. For money he knew Black Bart and his comrades would do anything, and money Judge Lawless had in plenty.

Half an hour passed. The judge began to cast many an impatient glance toward the door, when a bold, vigorous knock was heard. Knocks are very expressive to those who understand them; they speak as plainly as words; and this one was given with a loud, surly independence, that said, just as plainly as lips could speak: "I am as good a man as you are, Judge Lawless, and I don't care a curse for you or all the revenue officers from here to Land's End." Judge Lawless understood it, and throwing himself into a chair, he called out, blandly:

"Come in."

The door opened, and a short, thick-set, weather-beaten, grim-looking old sea-dog made his appearance, and giving his head a slight jerk to one side, by way of acknowledging the judge's presence, walked straight up to the fireplace, and deliberately spit a discharge of tobacco-juice right into the eyes of an unoffending cat, by way of commencing business. Then turning his back to the mantel, he put his hands behind him, crossed his feet, and stood ready to commence operations.

"Well, square, what's in the wind now?" demanded the new-comer at length, seeing the judge did not seem inclined to speak.

"Bart," said the judge, in a low, cautious tone, "I have a job for you."

"All right—I'm there! what's it, square? Anything in the old line?"

"No; this is something quite different. How long do you remain here this time?"

"Can't say for certain, boss. The schooner's off a-repairin' and we're tryin' the land dodge till she's ready again! no telling though, yet, when that may be."

"Is that woman who accompanies you here likewise?"

"Cap'n's wife! Well, yes, square, I reckon she is. What do you want of her?"

"I want her to take charge of a young girl that you must carry off. Do you understand?"

"Forcible 'duction, 'saulin' and batterin'! Come, square, you're goin' it strong."

"Speak lower, for heaven's sake! Will you undertake to do this for me?"

"If you make it worth while! Fork over the needful, and I'm there!"

"Money you shall have; but do you think this woman will undertake to look after the girl?"

"See here, square; don't say 'this woman.' Call her the cap'n's lady—sounds better. Oh, she's got nothing to do with it; she's got to mind the cap'n. Who's the gal?"

"Sh-sh! not so loud, man! Do you know the cottage on the Barrons, between Dismal Hollow and Heath Hill?"

"Like a book. Why, square, it's not that beauty they talk about here: Miss—Miss—danged if I don't forget the name!"

"Never mind the name—it's of no consequence. She's the girl. Do you know her?"

"Hain't the honor; but one of our crew, a sort of dry-water sailor, knows her; I'll bring him along, and everything will go off like a new broom."

"You must be careful to not mention my

name—not even to her; because it would be a dreadful thing for me if this were found out."

"Don't be scary, square, I'll be as close as a clam at high water. When do you want us to captivate the little dear?"

"To-night—any time—the sooner the better!"

"Will you be on hand yourself, square?"

"No! To avoid the faintest shadow of suspicion—though such is not likely to rest on me in any case—I will start for Baltimore immediately, within the very hour, and there remain till all the hubbub her disappearance causes has passed away. You will keep her securely in your hidden cave all the time; and when the excitement has died out I will come and relieve you of your charge."

"You're a brick, square—you are, by Lord Harry! What will be your next dodge, then?"

"That's as may be; most probably I shall take her with me to England. That's to be thought of yet, however; but I'll find a way, never fear."

"Square, they ought to flect you to the Senate—dang my buttons if they oughtn't! When I get unseaworthy I'm going to set up for myself; can lie and fight, and roar at 'agonists like a brick; and got all the other qualifications, too numerous to mention."

And with this slander on senators in general, Black Bart clapped half a plug of tobacco in the other cheek, and indulged in a quiet chuckle.

"Well, that's all, I believe," said the judge, rising. "You think you will know this girl when you see her?"

"I won't—'t'other one will—trust me, square; I'll go off and see him now, and him and me will take a stroll round that way."

"If she could be inveigled from the house after night it would be the best time and way," said the judge, musingly.

"Leave all them particulars to me, square; I'll fix things up about the tallest. When's the needful to come?"

"When I return. You know me. Now, Bart, remember, to-night if you can, in three or four weeks at the furthest, I will return."

The judge turned and left the room, mounted his horse and rode off. Black Bart hitched up his pantaloons, and then fell back in a chair, snapping his fingers, flourishing his heels, and indulging in such tremendous roars of laughter that the landlord rushed in, in deadly alarm, to see what awful calamity had happened.

But still Black Bart gave vent to such appalling laughter-claps, without speaking, throwing himself back as if his spine was made of steel springs, and then jerking himself straight again, kicking his heels, snapping his finger and thumb, and indulging in such extraordinary antics of delight, that Boniface, completely at a loss, stood staring at him in silent wonder, thinking the judge's communication, whatever it might have been, had completely turned his brain.

"There, Bart, be quiet now," said the host, soothingly. "You're scaring the people in the shop out of their wits. What's the matter with you, any way?"

"Nothing," replied Black Bart, going off in another roar, more deafening, if possible, than the first.

"Well, I must say 'nothing' seems to be rather funny," said the puzzled landlord.

"Was the judge pumping you about the smugglers?"

"Oh, Lord, don't!" shouted the sailor, with such a perfect yell of laughter and twisting himself into such frightful contortions of inward delight, that the startled host sprang back and grasped the handle of the door, with a terrified glance toward his strange guest.

"I'm off now," said Bart, at length, as soon as he had recovered from this last paroxysm; and wiping the tears from his eyes, he started at a Flora Temple pace down the street, pausing, however, now and then, as his lively sense of the ridiculous overcame him, to indulge in another terrifying peal of laughter, till affrighted pedestrians fled from him in horror, thinking a dangerous lunatic had somewhere broken loose.

He reached a low, smoky, obscure drinking den, near the end of the town, at last, and passing through the bar-room he entered another low, dirty, dingy apartment, where the first individual on whom his eyes rested, was our sometime friend, Mr. Rozzel Garnet.

"Well, Bart," asked that gentleman, eagerly, "what did Judge Lawless want of you in such haste?"

"Oh! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" roared Black Bart, in a perfect agony of enjoyment. "If it isn't about the best fun I've ever heard told on. Why, man alive, you'd never guess if you were to try from this to doomsday. Judge Lawless, the saint, the angel, the parson, has fell in love, and wants the girl carried off! Oh! ha! ha! ha! I'll split my sides!"

Mr. Rozzel Garnet did not join in Black Bart's merriment. He opened his eyes to their widest extent, and indulged in a long, low whistle, expressive of any amount of astonishment.

"Who's the girl?" he asked, at length.

"That wonderful beauty at Old Barrons Cottage—nothing shorter. Everything arranged, and the square will come down like a prince—or if he doesn't, we'll make him. I don't know her; so you're to come with me, and together we'll carry off the girl the first chance. The judge has gone to Baltimore to keep out of harm's way, and won't be back for three or four weeks. Ain't it beautiful? The old judge in love! Ha! ha! ha!"

Like lightning there flashed a project of revenge across the mind of Rozzel Garnet. None of the smugglers knew either Erminie or Judge Lawless, why not carry off Pet instead of the other, and thus gratify his own passions, disappoint the judge, and have revenge. The blood flashed fiercely and hotly to his face as he thought of it; and he rose and walked to the window to hide his emotion from the keen eyes of his fellow-smuggler—for Garnet had joined them in their roving life after leaving the judge's.

"Well, old fellow, what do you say to it?" asked Black Bart.

"I'm your man!" exclaimed Garnet, turning from the window, all his customary cool composure restored. "We will start immediately, and keep watch until night; it is more than probable we will see her before then, and, as the judge says, the sooner the better. Come along."

Had Petronilla's lucky star set! had her good angel deserted her! had Satan come to the assistance of his earthly myrmidons! had the Fates willed it, that her pony "Starlight" should on that eventful day cast a shoe, lame himself, and so be unfit to ride!

Pet rambled restlessly about the house, one minute terrifying rooks, and bats, and swallows from their homes in the eaves and chimneys, by banging away at some new polka on the piano; the next, seizing the bellows for a partner, and going waltzing round the room; the next, rushing like a mad thing as she was, up stairs, and then sliding down the banisters.

"For," said Pet, "exercise is good for the health; and as Aunt Deb won't let me ride the clothes-horse, I'm going to try this."

And try it she did, till she tore the dress nearly off her back; and then, getting tired of this, she dragged, and see Erminie!

The day was beautiful; so Pet determined to walk. Throwing a light muslin cape over her shoulders, and pulling a broad straw flat down over her eyes, the dark-eyed "heirless, beauty, and belle," set out, singing as she went.

Somehow, since the return of Ray, Pet had visited the cottage much less frequently than usual, and in all probability would not have gone now, only she knew he had gone to Judestown that morning and was not expected back until the next day. Pet saw that he shunned and avoided her; and no matter how easy and natural he had been a moment before, the instant she entered he wrapped himself in his very coldest mantle of reserve, and looked more like a banished prince than a common Christian. Pet saw this; and her own heart, as proud as his in another way, swelled with wounded feeling and indignation; and she inwardly vowed to let him see that she cared just as little for him as he could possibly care for her. Poor Pet! this conviction and resolution cost her the first bitter tears she had ever shed in her whole sunny life; but as she felt them falling warm and fast, she sprang quickly up, dashed them indignantly away, as if ashamed to own even to her own heart how much she cared for him.

"No; he shall never know that I cared two pins about him!" exclaimed Pet, with flashing eyes and flushing cheeks. "He dislikes me; I can see that plainly enough; and if he was a prince of the blood royal, I would not stoop to sue for his favor. I don't care for him; I won't care for him. I just hate him—a stiff, haughty, young Turk—there now!"

And then having relieved her mind by a "real good cry," Pet got up and whistled to her dogs, and set off for a scamper round the yard, to the great detriment of her gaiters, and the alarming increase of her appetite. Pet wasn't sentimental; so she neither took to sighing nor star-gazing, nor writing poetry; but pursued the even, or rather uneven, tenor of her way, and inwardly vowed that, if no body cared for her, she would care for no body.

Little did Pet know the real cause of Ray's avoidance. High-spirited and proud, almost morbid in his pride at times, and loving this dazzling, sparkling vision of beauty and brightness more and more every time he saw her, he felt it his duty to shun her as much as possible. To know this star-eyed, dazzling, dancing fay without loving her was a simple impossibility; and Ray Germaine, with his passionate admiration of beauty, and fiery gipsy blood, loved her with an intensity that only hot, passionate, Southern natures like his can feel.

And with this mad love was the certain conviction that he might as well love a "bright, particular star," and hope to win it, as the wealthy heiress of Judge Lawless, who was soon destined to make her debut in the gilded salons of Washington city, where all the lions of the capital would soon be in adoration at her feet. And he—what was he? The grandson of a gipsy woman, educated by the bounty of a stranger. What was he that he should dare to lift his eyes to this peerless beauty and belle? Proud, as we have said he was, to excess, he shunned and avoided her for whom he would have given up the wide world and all it contained, had he possessed it, lest in some unguarded moment he should disclose to her the secret of his fierce and daily increasing love.

And in this unpleasant way matters stood on the day when Pet set out from Heath Hill to Old Barrons Cottage. Pet was a good walker; but, owing to the intense heat, she was completely tired out by the time she reached the cottage. Erminie alone was there, ready to welcome her friend with her own peculiar, sunny smile.

It was very pleasant, that cool, breezy sitting-room, that scorchingly hot day, with its plain straw matting, its cool, green, Venetian blinds, its plump, tempting, cushioned rocking-chairs, and fragrant bouquets of flowers in glasses of pure, sparkling water. But the prettiest, pleasantest sight of all was its lovely young mistress in her simple, beautifully-fitting dress of blue gingham, with its snowy collar and little black silk apron boasting the cunningest pockets in the world; her shiny hair floating twined in broad damp braids round her superb little head; and where the sunshine lingered lovingly upon it, seeming like a shining glory over her smooth white brow. Yes, it was very pleasant—the pretty cottage-room; the lovely cottage-maiden; and yet the dark, bright, dazzling brunette in her glancing soft silk, with her flashing jetty curls, her lustrous, splendid Syrian eyes, of midnight blackness; her whole vivacious, restless, glittering, entrancing face and form lost nothing by contrast with any one in the world.

"Well, I declare, Erminie, I don't know any place in the wide world half as cool and pleasant as this cottage of yours. Now, at Heath Hill it's enough to roast an African. Goodness! how hot I am!" said Pet, commencing to fan herself vigorously.

"The sea-breeze makes this cool," said Erminie; "that is the reason. I am so glad you came over this afternoon, for Ray, you know, is not coming home to-night. It is really too bad, I think, that he should leave us and go back again to that tiresome New York so soon."

"Ah! when is he going?" said Pet, still violently fanning herself, though her bright bloom of color was far less vivid than it had been a moment before.

"The day after to-morrow, he says; and not to return for perhaps a year. I will feel dreadfully lonesome, I know, and grandmother will miss him so much. But young men are so headstrong and self-willed that there is no doing anything with them—don't you think so, Pet?" said Erminie, smiling.

"Never thought on the subject as I know of; but I dare say they are. They're not to be blamed for it, though; it runs in man's wretched nature. Ah! I never was properly thankful for not being a man till one day I went and dressed myself in a suit of their clothes. Such wretchedly feeling things as they were, to be sure! I've never been in the stocks, or the pillory, or stretched on a rack, or walking through a treadmill, or any of those other disagreeable things; but ever since then I've a pretty good notion of what they must be like. It was a regular martyrdom while I had them on, and how the mischief anybody ever can survive in them is more than I know. Think of descending to posterity in a pair of pants!"

Erminie laughed, and Pet rattled on till tea was ready. Then they drank Lucy's fragrant black tea, and ate her delicate nice waffles, and praised her jam; and then, when the sun had long set, and the dark, cool, evening

shadows began to fall, Pet got up, put on her hat, kissed Erminie, and set out on her return to Heath Hill.

"You ought to have told some of the servants to come for you," said Erminie. "It is rather far for you to go alone."

"Oh, there is no danger," said Pet; "on the forest road and the shore there may be; but here on the heath all is safe enough. Good night." And Pet started off at a brisk walk.

Two men, crouching behind a clump of stunted spruce bushes, were watching her with lynx eyes, as her slight, graceful form approached. It was not quite dark, but what the Scotch call "the gloaming," and the bright draped figure was plainly conspicuous on the brown, bare heath.

"There she comes at last," whispered the younger of the two, in a quick, fierce tone, breathing hotly and quickly while he spoke; "I will spring out as she passes and throw this shawl over her head, while you tie her hands and feet."

"All right," said the other, in the same low tone. "Jupiter! how she goes it! Can't she walk Spanish, though? I tell you, Garnet, she's a regular stunner, and no mistake."

The other made no reply. His lurid, burning eyes were fixed on the dark, brilliant face of Petronilla.

All unconscious she passed on. Scarcely had she done so when, with the quick, noiseless spring of a panther, Garnet darted from behind the bushes, and flung a large plaid over the head of Pet, and grasped her firmly in his arms. With equal agility the other followed; and Pet was securely bound hand and foot before she had sufficiently recovered from her surprise to make the slightest struggle.

"Mine! Mine! at last!" whispered a voice she knew too well, as his arms enfolded her in a fierce embrace. "Beautiful eagle, caged at last!"

In vain she struggled—in vain she strove to cry out for help. Feet and hands were securely bound; the heavy shawl was half smothering her, and her captor's arms held her like a vise.

"Now for the cave! On! on! there's no time to lose!" cried Garnet, with fierce impatience, starting forward as though he were carrying an infant over the heath.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 290.)

A "WESTERN" CHARACTER.

BY FRANK DAVES.

He is before me now as I think, With the kind smile, and wisdom wink. The shake of the head, and the sidelong blink; And the sandy hair, and the grizzly look, And the long, rough nose, with many a crook; And the long, thin chin, and the great bear eyes.

Like two red stars high up in the skies— The anthing gait, and the old arms, And the witty remarks, and other charms. I see him now, as I saw him of old Scampering along the streets as bold As an African lion, and rough as a log. Drunk as a fool, and wild as a hog.

"I'm not saying it wasn't, Mickie, looking at the matter from your standpoint. No, your suspicions were natural enough, only you might have known that I wouldn't have cheated a friend; but let that pass. This gold belongs to me, alone. I hid it here nearly three years ago, as you can see by the date of this paper. Ah, I forgot that you can't read. Never mind. You can't well doubt me, after I tell you that I am willing to divide with you—to give you one-half of this gold—"

"You ain't lyin'!" muttered Lynch, brushing the moisture from his brow, an eager light in his eyes.

"No, I'm in earnest. Only—you can keep a secret?"

"Try me," was the prompt reply. "For a friend, I kin."

"Good enough! Well, then, half of this gold is yours; your share will pan out about twenty-five thousand dollars, Mickie. Hush—wait until I am through. Not only is one half of this yours, but I know where we can lay hands on ten times as much. Yes, I have found out that old rascal's secret, and we will empty his precious pocket, you and I, Mickie, my man!"

"I'd go to the divvle fer ye, twice over, fer half the money, an' say thank ye into the bargain—I would so! But ye mane it? Ye ain't comin' the blarney over me?"

"No, honor bright, Mickie; surely you can trust me, after what I have told you. But listen, I'll give you another proof; I'll put my very life in your hands. Then you'll believe I'm in sober earnest."

"The fact is," continued Brand, speaking in a low, confidential tone, as he squatted over the pile of gold and deliberately filled his pipe, "the fact is, Mickie, I'm tired of the kind of life we're leading. It's all very well for a change, but it's too slow to suit me. Now, I've made up my mind to cut loose from the band, and strike out for myself. With this gold, together with what we can make out of this pocket of that old fool, we can afford to put on style and cut a spurge, if we wish. We—for, of course, you mean to stick by me—will make our way to Frisco, take passage on the first steamer for, say England or Ireland. 'Twouldn't be safe to stop in the States, for some years, at least, for you know how strict the oath of the band is. We'd be hunted out and killed, sure."

"There—I think I have proved my faith in you, for were you to even hint at what I have just said, were Barada could get hold of it, my head wouldn't be worth a single smell of whiskey."

"Divvle a Lynch in the wuruld was iver a thairlor, nor will Mickie be the first to play the dirty informer," earnestly replied the Irishman.

"Good enough! I knew I could trust you, old man," said Brand, frankly enough; yet there was a devilish glint in his eye that boded no good for his trusting comrade. "First, we will take and put this stuff in a better place; some of the boys might chance by and take a notion to see who had disturbed the ground here, and what for. Come, off with your breeches; they're stouter than mine, and these precious nuggets are too heavy for anything else to stand the pressure."

Nothing loth, Lynch took off his trousers, and first tying the bottoms of the legs firmly, tenderly dropped the rough, irregular nuggets of gold into the novel receptacle, while Eli Brand secured the skin-bags containing the dust and pebbles.

An eavesdropper would have declared that the two men were upon the best of terms, that they trusted each other without a single doubt or scruple to mar the harmony that should always exist between friends. And yet, while his tongue was uttering seemingly sincere expressions of friendship, while he was planning their future course in life as true brothers in everything, Eli Brand was carefully maturing a foul act of treachery—was studying how he could best murder his comrade.

Together the two men trudged away from the rifled cache, weighted down by the burden of gold—already blood-stained, yet fated to receive another horrible baptism—Eli Brand beguiling the way with his smooth, plausible tongue.

He selected a spot where, as he said, the gold could rest without fear of discovery, until they could secure that other treasure and complete their arrangements for abandoning the band. Then, carefully obliterating all traces of their work, even breaking their trail for some yards around the cache, Brand led the way toward the cave.

"We must not like foxes, Mickie," he said, chuckling grimly. "Barada is no fool, and let him once get wind of what we are thinking of, and—good-by, John!"

The unsuspicious Irishman cheerfully assented to everything, and trudged on, little dreaming of what was in store.

Brand did not hesitate. He had decided that Lynch must die, and when about half a mile from the new cache, he allowed the Irishman to pass him. Silently drawing a revolver, he cocked and discharged it with almost the same motion, its muzzle so close to his victim's head that the hair was scorched and the skin blackened by the discharge.

One wild, horrible yell burst from the poor devil's lips, as he staggered blindly forward, then fell, the mingled blood and brains oozing from his shattered skull. With an angry, exultant snarl, not unlike that of a maddened panther, Eli Brand sprang upon his victim, burying the long blade of his knife once, twice to the very hilt between his shoulders. Then, assured that his foul work was well done, he sprang to his feet and darted away from the spot with all the speed at his command, never once glancing behind him.

Better for him, perhaps, if he had glanced back; at least his end might have been different. He would have seen three men gliding through the bushes, gradually approaching the murdered man. Might have seen them pause beside the body; one stooped and turned him over.

"He's did fer," muttered Old Business, glancing at his companions. "He's got enough to kill a mule!"

Lynch opened his eyes. Though fast falling over with death, they possessed the light of reason.

"He killed me—Eli Brand," fell from his lips in slow, painful speech. "I didn't think it o' him, the snake in the grass! But I'll be revenged—I'll be revenged!"

Then, incoherently, scarcely to be understood, he confessed the whole truth. How they had unearthed the gold and placed it in a new cache; even gave them directions for finding it, adding with his fast-fleeting breath:

"Take it—take it all! Don't let that cursed rapparee iver set his dirty eyes on so much as a smell iv it. Don't—or my curse—the curse iv a dyin', murdered man lie upon ye forever an' iver!"

He was sinking fast, yet he smiled faintly when assured that Brand should never again

touch the blood-stained gold. He raved feebly of the old country, of his mother, of a little colleen whose eyes had been dimmed with tears as she bade him farewell and God-speed his quick return with a fortune from the wonderful land toward the setting sun; and then, with her name upon his lips, together with a broken prayer to Holy Mary, he died.

Silently Old Business placed the lifeless clay in a little hollow, cast a handful of leaves over the bloody form, then piled heavy rocks over all. 'Twas a rude burial; a fitting end for a wild, reckless life like his.

"Now for the gold," said Old Business, in his old tone. "That pizen cuss shain't hev none of it, even if I hev to swallow the hull lot—so thar!"

The spot was found, the treasure collected, and Old Business led the way down to the creek. After wading down its bed for some little distance, he selected a deep, dark pool, and cast his treasure into the water.

"It'll lay thar ontel the crack o' doom, unless we fish fer it fust. An' now, while we're in the humor, reckon we'd better look after our t'other bit o' wealth. Lucky 'tain't fur from this place. Come!"

He led the way up the valley, his keen eyes roving around as though in quest of some landmark.

"Yender 'tis—at the foot o' that rock, yender, you'll find my pocket. I didn't look into it very deep, but ef what I seed is a fair sample o' the rest, I reckon we'll pan out 'bout seventy million! Fact, by thunder!"

Eagerly the three men ran toward the indicated rock, nor was Old Business the least agitated of the three.

CHAPTER XXX.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

A SHARP cry of anger broke from the lips of the trailer, echoed back by exclamations of surprise from his comrades. The soil at the base of the huge boulder was torn and trampled.

"Robbed! some one has been before us!" snarled Old Business, his eyes glittering venomously.

"Are you sure—is there no mistake?" ventured Mark.

"This is the spot; you can see for yourself," shortly replied the trailer, as he bent low, his eye closely scrutinizing the ground. "Two men have been here—ha!"

He produced the little package of strings before alluded to, and selecting one of the thongs, carefully compared it with one of the footprints. Then he raised his head with a quizzical glance and half-smile.

"It's my treat, boys—such a double an' twisted fool as I've bin! Jest think o' me! Old Business in a mimm—think o' my bein' sucked in like that! What I tuck fer a 'pocket' was somebody's cache; an' all 'cause I was in too big a hurry to 'zamine the thing close."

"Then seeing that his meaning was still obscure, he added:

"This is the how. I stopped by this rock, t'other day, to grub. I was as busy thinkin' as eatin', an' as a critter will do sometimes when he don't know it, I was foolin' with my knife in the ground. Fust thing I knowed, I flopped up a nugget o' gold, nigh half a pound weight. Nat'ally that waked me up all over, an' I looked fudder. The little chunks o' gold was layin' thick as six in a bed with three in the middle. I thought 'twas a pocket, but couldn't stop to fool then. Kiyered it up, then hunted up you two fellows. Now you see, somebody's been here, an' our pocket turns out to be no better'n a empty cache!"

"But why cooche? I don't see why—"

"Look: one, two—hate a dozen; three marks was made by bags o' dust. Dogs gold-dust gen'ally grow in skin saggies! So cally—leastways, not in 'pockets' made by natur! Then it's a cache. More'n that, 'twas that Eli Brand cuss who emptied it. Yes—I've got his measure here; I ain't goin' it blind. So, you see, all's serene, since we've got the do-funny."

If not convinced, Mark and Pike were silenced. Some points in the trailer's explanation seemed rather weak, but since their acquaintance, Old Business had gained such an ascendancy over their minds, that either would as soon have distrusted his own senses as the words of their friend.

"So much for so much, then; we'll call that matter settled. Now fer more 'portant business. Old man, jest take the trouble to open your ears, an' keep 'em so while I'm speakin'. Mind, now; I kin prove every word I'm goin' to say. Your real name is Harvey Wilson; you are a native of Baltimore; you were an inmate of an insane asylum. And now—shall I tell you what you were put in there for?"

Pike crouched upon the ground, his face livid with an unutterable horror, his eyes wild and glaring as those of a wild beast. His lips parted, his throat worked, but the words would not come forth. In a low, steady tone Old Business continued:

"You see I know all; that all is much more than you ever dreamed of. Listen, I pledge you my word as a man, that you are far less guilty than you think. As God hears me, your daughter is still living."

With an inarticulate cry Pike sprang forward and clasped the trailer's knees. His features were frightfully convulsed, his eyes, bloodshot and wild as those of a madman, eloquently pleaded for what his tongue failed to utter.

"Wait," was the cold reply. "A few days will seem short enough after all these weary years. You must earn the reward first. Are you willing?"

"Yes—anything," gasped Pike. "Only tell me what it is you expect, what it is you require of me!"

"You know where Wild Cat is! Good! I will give you a note, which you must place in the hands of Mat Blaine, the sheriff. You understand?"

While speaking, Old Business was hastily making some hieroglyphics upon the leaf of a small note-book, which he produced from an inner pocket.

"Deliver this, then return, and I will tell you where you can find your child, alive and well. Fail, and you shall never see her again. Now go. Remember, the sooner you deliver that note and return with the answer, the sooner will you see your child. If I don't meet you on the road, make at once for the little cave beneath the three cedars; you know where."

"You swear that you are not deceiving me?"

"I swear it, by the mother who bore me, by the God who made me," was the earnest and solemn reply.

Without another word Pike darted away upon his mission. Old Business turned to Mark, who had stood in open-mouthed astonishment during this strange interview, and addressed him in the old, whimsical manner.

"The old 'un scratches gravel mighty peert, don't he? Waal, thar's need o' haste. You 'nd I, too, hev got work to do, an' we'd better

be 'bout it. You see'd how he trusted me; will you do the same?"

"I must help her," said Mark. "That's swore to. Afore this time to-morrow, the little gal'll be free as yender squirrel, or Old Business'll be dead."

"Who and what are you, anyhow?" demanded Mark, looking into his comrade's face with something akin to awe.

"A man—a pore, forlorn critter which is a wanderin' round an' round in this 'ere wale o' sorrows an' kenyon o' troubles an' tribbleations, called by them what hain't hed the double fist o' 'ligion knockin' at the front door o' thar hearts, the beautiful world, which they never think is only a tavern putt up fer the 'commodation o' us pore, pilgrimatin' sinners too tarry a bit at when we git fustore an' weary an' want to take a snooze. Oh—oh!"

Old Business nodded complacently toward Mark, a mild, benign light shining in his eyes. "That means—none of my business?" with a half laugh.

"Young man, you're an ornament to your sect—a honor to them which bring you up. You kin see through a hole fudder'n any o' them whose eyes ain't better'n yours. An' yit—I don't know. Mebbe we won't never hev a better time, an' the truth must out some time. Ay! so be it, then! Come—and prepare your mind for sad, bitter tidings."

Old Business set off across the valley at a rapid pace. Mark followed close at his heels, yet there was something so strange and unlike his usual self in the trailer, that he kept a hand upon one of the revolvers taken from the murdered Irishman. He half-believed that Old Business was crazy.

It was nearly noon when the two entered Dick's Pocket. Not until he passed by the ruins of the shanty and seated himself upon a rock beside the green, oblong mound, did Old Business speak. The nasal twang had disappeared with the uncouth dialect.

"Young man," he began in a clear, distinct voice. "You have asked who and what I am, and I have brought you here, beside this grave—the grave of the man who was called Gospel Dick—to satisfy your curiosity. You have heard of a man called Philip Epes?"

"Uncle Phil—what of him?" cried Mark, eagerly.

"Your uncle—that is, the half-brother of your father. He was a hard case, this Phil—"

"Stop! what right have you to slander the dead, and to me?" demanded Mark, his face flushing hotly.

"The truth is no slander, boy; I only speak of what I know. And yet, reckless, ne'er-do-well as Phil Epes was, it would have gladdened his heart to have heard such words from your lips."

"If he only could! He was misunderstood in life, but the truth came out at last. Too late, though, for him; when we sought for him we found only his grave."

"You are deceived again; you found another grave, not mine. Yes, Mark, my boy—I am Phil Epes. Ah, I was afraid of that," he added, sadly, as Mark drew back with a look of doubt. "But never mind; you will believe me in time, for I have plain evidence to prove all I assert. No—wait; wait until I tell you all, then if you offer your hand I will accept it."

"Listen, now. If you have heard how I left home, very well; if not, let it pass for the present. Enough that I parted from your father with anger upon both sides—parted never to meet again in life. When he cast me off, swearing that henceforth he had no brother, I went to the bad, in sober earnest. I became a gambler, a desperado; yet, though blood stained my hands, 'twas shed only in self-defense. The stakes were even—life against life. But there! I cannot trace out my life, step by step, to-day. There is something in the air that chokes me. Enough that I went back, at last, to seek a reconciliation with him—your father. Then I learned of his strange disappearance, here, in the mines. I came here, resolved to unravel the mystery, though it took a lifetime."

"And you failed—just as I have," muttered Mark, painfully.

"No, I succeeded. Yes—though I did not find him—"

"You found—you found his—" faltered the young miner.

"His grave—yes. Bear up, lad," he added, touching Mark gently. "You must have expected this. Your vain search must have prepared you. And there is more to come; you have not heard the worst. Your father was murdered! Stop—sit down here beside me, and hear me out."

Mark couldn't resist the strong will of his companion, and crouched upon the ground, trembling like a leaf. Old Business clearly and succinctly repeated the story of Gospel Dick, told how he had arrived at the truth, how he had followed the winding trail through all its crossings; but which need not be recapitulated here. Enough that Gospel Dick and John R. Austin were one and the same person.

"I am not positive, yet I would almost swear that I know his murderer's name," added the trailer. "The crime rests between two persons; both of them are here, within reach of our hands. Yes—I understand. You shall have your share in the work. Only for that I would not have brought you here. Now—over his grave, over all that remains of your murdered father: here, palm to palm, I ask you to join with me in the oath to avenge him. Are you ready and willing?"

Mark made no reply in words but arose, and then, with bared heads and crossed palms they mutually swore to know no rest till the murdered man was fearfully avenged. Then, no before, Mark spoke:

"You say the deed is between two men; their names?"

"One is called Vincente Barada, the other Eli Brand."

A sharp cry broke from Mark's lips, as he started back. Old Business smiled sadly. He read the action aright; he knew that Mark was thinking of her—of Edna Brand.

At that moment a crashing sound came from the hillside above, and drew their attention in that direction. They saw the displaced rock bounding toward them—and more, they distinguished a number of dark figures darting through the undergrowth—caught the bright glimmering of the sun upon leveled weapons—heard the sharp cry:

"Thar they be—sock it to 'em, pardas—who-oo!"

Then came the sharp rattle of firearms—the hillside was marked here and there with tiny puffs of blue, fleecy smoke.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AT WORK.

"KIVER, lad—to kiver!" cried Old Business, as he flung an arm around Austin's waist and flung him quickly aside as the pistol bullet began to patter around them. "Into the bresh, yender—quick! Then sock daylight right through the fust cuss you kin sight. Who-oo! ye divils—ye onmanly mud-turkles

o' perdition—ye caterwaulin' hyenas o' thunder an' guns—ye two-legged tarantules o' sinful sin—hyars the place to git your money back, an' more, too! Ef you're lookin' fer us, hyar we be—the high-toned catawaran o' knock-'em-stiff, the green-tailed bedbug o' Sleepy Holly—hi-yah!"

The trailer's last words were blended with the sharp report of his revolver, and with a wild, agonized scream, one of the men upon the hillside sprang convulsively forward, turning in the air and alighting headforemost upon a jagged boulder twenty feet below.

A united yell of rage followed this blow, and the comrades of the death-stricken man charged down the hillside, pouring a volley of lead into the clump of bushes behind which the two miners had sought refuge.

The instant after firing, Old Business closely hugged the ground, holding Mark down with a strength the young man could not resist. Thanks to this precaution, nearly all of the bullets passed over their bodies, harmlessly. One ploughed its way through the fleshy part of the trailer's shoulder; the wound, though bleeding profusely, seemed to act as a spur, to arouse the worst passions of the old man's nature.

"Thar's only five—we must wipe 'em out; mind, not one must git away, or they'll spile our plans. Up, now, and show yourself a man!"

The last words were uttered almost in a shriek, and Old Business, unable to control himself any longer, sprang to his feet and opened fire upon the enemy, who, five in number, were nearly at the base of the hill; that is some twenty paces from the two men.

His face inflamed, his eyes glaring like living coals and almost bursting from their sockets, uttering a hoarse, maddening cry as he leaped forward, Old Business seemed transformed into a very demon. The outlaws, daring and reckless as they undoubtedly were, under ordinary circumstances, seemed fairly cowed, and though they returned the trailer's fire, it was with a lagard, as though merely practicing at an inanimate target. The purely outlaw plunged forward, sorely wounded. Then, with a clear shout, Mark sprang forward to the assistance of his new-found relative.

But his aid wasn't needed. Thrice, in as many seconds, the trailer's revolver spoke, and as often a foeman sunk to the ground dead or dying, checked by the unerring bullet. Again the hammer fell; but this time no report followed the explosion of the cap; the pistol had missed fire.

Until now almost paralyzed with horror, this escape seemed to give the sole surviving outlaw strength to flee, and turning, he darted down the valley with a yell of terror. But the flight was short. With a terrible curse, Old Business bounded forward like some maddened wild beast. Then he drew back his arm and hurled the useless pistol with all the power at his command. The heavy weapon struck the outlaw full upon the back of the neck, felling him as the butcher's ax fells the bullock. Old Business flashed forth his knife and bent over the quivering body; but the weapon was not required. Either the blow or the fall had broken the fugitive's neck.

The trailer brushed the perspiration from his brow and glanced around. He saw Mark Austin gazing upon him with a look of mingled awe and wonder. His face suddenly blanched, and a faint smile parted his lips; a smile, not of pride, but seemingly one of pain and regret.

This lasted only for a moment; then he was once more the careless, imperturbable Old Business.

"I don't reckon they made much on this lay, young feller," he said, like the unassuming folks must 'a' run ag'inst our bullets a-purpos—just to cheat us out o' sheer o' the fun."

"This is horrible!" muttered Mark, brushing the cold drops from his brow as he glanced around the bloody scene. "It looks more like murder—"

"Was either them or us," sharply interrupted the trailer. "They fired the first shot, and meant to murder us—since you like the word. We only acted in self defense."

Mark was quieted, if not convinced. Old Business took a rapid survey of the fallen. Incredible as it may seem, only one was alive; and he fast dying. The trailer questioned him sharply, but the wretch only replied by wild, incoherent ravings of his childhood's home—of his mother, his sister, and brother. Then—a burst of blood from his lips, and all was over.

"Come," muttered Old Business; "we ain't got much time to waste, but we'll put these hardkides whar the wolves nur buzzards won't pester 'em."

The spot occupied but little time. The bodies were rolled into a little gully, some earth pushed over them, then a dozen heavy boulders served to cover all. It was a rude burial, but the two men knew full well that it was better treatment than would have been fallen them, had the victory rested with the outlaws.

"There's no doubt about their being after us?"

This was more nearly a question than an assertion, and as such Old Business answered it.

"They was after me, no doubt. I don't think they even so much as 'spected who you was, only they knowed they couldn't take one 'bout t'other. This 's the way I read the 'afar. This mornin' I turned up missin'; that little lack made the head galoot, Barada, sure his 'spions was right—that I was actin' as a sort o' spy, ye know. In course he gets red-hot, send out a lot o' his boys with orders to take me or bust. These fellows stumbled onto us, an'—busted. So much fer me."

"On your side, I'll bet money this is the lay-out. From what you told me 'bout that blackeyed woman, I judge she's dead-struck on you. She socked you down in that hole, but you kin bet high that she knowed all about that grass an' moss, an' felt dead sure you wouldn't git much hurt. She meant to try of darkness an' a plentiful supply o' nothin' to eat an' drink wouldn't bring ye down to the lovin' point. She'd make ye think ye was to starve to death, then, when you war drawn down purty fine, she'd come and give ye another trial. That's why I think you hain't been missed yet, an' ef I'm right, we'll have the little gal safe out o' thar this very night," and Old Business nodded his head complacently.

"You mean to—?" began Mark, eagerly.

"Just so; but ef you've no 'bjections, I reckon we'd better be gittin' away from this place. Noise travels a long distance, an' thar's no tellin' how many more o' our friends thar is in these parts. Come; I'll take you to my cache; we kin talk thar while I'm puttin' on my old rig. 'Twouldn't be healthy fer Marco the Scar to loaf 'round these parts very long."

Leading the way, Old Business rapidly left

Dick's Pocket behind. Both men kept a keen lookout, for if the trailer's surmise was right, the outlaws would spare no pains to punish the bold spy who had so completely deceived them, and another collision might not end so favorably.

At length Old Business, after a long and careful look around, parted a screen of bushes that lined the foot of a precipitous hill, and signed for Mark to follow. Austin found himself in a small, close cave or den, lighted imperfectly by several small, irregular openings in the rock above. There were no signs of it ever having been occupied, until Old Business raised a flat rock from one corner of the uneven floor, revealing several packages, prominent among which was his beloved rifle.

"This is my wardrobe," chuckled the trailer, as he unrolled the ragged suit worn when he first met Mark, and set a small bit of looking-glass where the light from above fell full upon his face. "It's a pity to spile such a purty scar, but business."

He washed off the painted scar, carefully removed the false mustache and laid it aside with the wig that hid his own close-cropped hair. In place of these he donned the shaggy wig and tobacco-stained beard, so much more appropriate to the character of Old Business. Meanwhile his tongue was not idle.

"You want to know what my 'rangements air fer to-night. Waal, they're easy told. Fust, we'll lay 'round kinder loose till night. We kin sneak up close enough 'mong the rocks to see ef anythin' 'strany is goin' on at the cavern. When dark comes, we'll go 'round to the hole—the one we come out of, you know. Ef they hain't found out that you're missin', all's serene; the job's good as did. You see that quile o' rope? With that, it'll be easy 'nough to git up out o' that hole we both tumbled in. Then I'll strike a bee line fer the place whar I seed her last night; I'll tell her you're a-waitin', jest red-hot to make love to her. In course she'll go with me, then. We'll take the back trail, travel hot-foot fer Wild Cat, whar you two kin wait fer me while I go back with Matt Blaine an' his posse to clean out the gang. See?"

The plan sounded so plausible, and the trailer spoke so confidently, as though there was not the remotest chance of failure, that Mark gradually became his old self, cheerful, and full of confidence.

Old Business completed his toilet, and then, after a close examination satisfied himself that there were no curious eyes near to watch them, he led the way toward the hill retreat of Barada's band.

It was now mid-afternoon when the two men succeeded in gaining a position from whence they could look down upon the long ledge that extended before and upon both sides of the cave entrance. No one could pass in or out without their seeing him, and satisfied of this, they lay quietly under cover, waiting for the moment of action.

All was quiet in the vicinity. Only the initiated could have suspected the existence of such a formidable league in that place.

Then two men made their appearance upon the ledge. A long breath hissed through the trailer's lips as he recognized Vincente Barada and Eli Brand, and his fingers closed upon Mark's arm with a force that caused him to wince.

The two men seemed deep in conversation, but Old Business strained his ears in vain. The words were inaudible. Then Barada ran lightly down the hill, followed by Brand. If they continued in this course, the trail would carry them close to the ambush of the spies. Holding their breath and lying low, the two men waited.

"I tell you you must come, or they'll begin to think we're putting up a job on them. Besides, I've got work for you to do to there to-night."

These words were uttered by Pacific Pete as he passed within a dozen steps of the ambush. The trailer's eyes glowed like living coals, as he hissed in Mark's ear:

"We've got him now—the murderer of your father!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 296.)

Success in Life.

SUCCESS does not come by chance; Providence helps those who help themselves. We may fancy that two men adopt the same means toward the attainment of the same end, and because one succeeds and the other fails, we may say that the one is more fortunate than the other. But the one succeeds and the other fails, because they do not adopt the same means toward the same end. Of the two pilgrims who started on their journey, each with peas in his shoon, the one was not more fortunate than the other—he was simply more wise. The man who sunk by the way, toil-worn and foot-sore, with drops of agony on his forehead, groaning with pain, may have been the better walker of the two. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. It is by the right application of your swiftness or your strength to the peculiar object in view that you may make your way to success. It is not only by doing the right thing, but by doing the right thing in the right way, and at the right time, that we achieve the great triumphs of life. The varying results which we discern are not attributable to chance—not to external circumstances of any kind—but to inherent differences within ourselves—whatsoever envy or vanity may say upon the subject. Success is a substantial and enduring reality; luck is a mere vapor that is speedily dissolving. 'Wealth gotten by vanity,' says Solomon, 'shall diminish; but he that gathereth by labor shall increase.'

Fortune is represented as a woman—do we not call her Dame Fortune?—and she must be laboriously won. Are we to sit down by the wayside, and expect that she will seat herself in our lap? Any man may have anything, if he only goes about res

IN WEARINESS.

BY EREN E. REXFORD.
Author of "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

I am weary. Let me rest.
Underneath the nodding clover,
With the grass upon my breast,
And the daisies bending over,
Oh! the thought is strangely sweet!
Rest and peace secure from sorrow,
And the tramp of busy feet;
Rest, that breaks on no to-morrow.

I am weary. Let me sleep.
With my hands upon my bosom,
But I pray you, let me keep
In their clasp, some little blossom.
I have loved earth's flowers well;
Sweetest friendship they have given.
Are the roses half as fair
That shall bloom for us in Heaven?

I am weary, and would rest;
As a child, with sorrow grieving,
Finds upon its mother's breast
Peace, in her gentle love believing;
So, to the green bosom of earth,
Turn I, weary, tired and lonely,
For the rest that I shall find
On her gentle bosom only.

Only "An Assistant."

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

A MAY sunset, with tenderly-tinted skies,
from whence the golden-glowing horizon
melted to a delicious shade of blossom pink,
away up in mid-Heaven.

A warm, fragrant air was softly blowing,
fresh from the west, scattering snowy showers
of blossoms on the vivid grass, and swaying
the loose puffs of hair on Beryl Hawthorne's
forehead, as she stood leaning over the low,
rustic gate, down by the entrance to the
Havenleigh grounds—grand, picturesque
grounds, that stretched for miles, and in the
midst of which was the big, old-fashioned
stone farmhouse, with its heavy, somber, sub-
stantial furniture, its stores of home-spun
linen, its wealth of homely, solid comfort.

Beryl looked back from the gate to the
house, that was flooded with the lingering
glories of sundown, and a half sad, half ex-
ultant expression came to her eyes—grave, ear-
nest, beautiful eyes, black as a raven's plumage,
and shaded by long, curling-lashed, white lids.

Then, when an eager, almost impatient step
brought John Havenleigh into sight, the ex-
pression of her face and eyes changed again
into a look of soft, womanly pity.

He came up to her and laid his hands on
hers; a big, fine-looking fellow, whom you
would have felt would have been a good son,
brother or husband.

Hardly handsome, and yet Beryl thought,
as she looked at him that evening, she had
never seen him look so well.

"I thought I would find you here, Beryl,
for I remembered how fond you are of watch-
ing the sun go down from here. Isn't it
grand?"

Just the tiniest possible guilty flush crept
swiftly over the girl's face. "She knew so well
the charms of the sunset had not called
her thither."

"I never shall forget it, I think, this last
sunsetting at dear old Havenwood. I have
been very happy here, and you have all been
so good, John, and you and your dear old mother,
and Mr. Havenleigh."

Suspicious of grateful tears were clouding
her beautiful eyes.

"Don't talk about our being good to you,
Beryl; you, who have been the life and sun-
shine of our house since you came to us, years
ago, a friendless little waif—a disguised angel,
rather."

Beryl smiled faintly.

"You always have had the habit of over-
estimating me, you know, John."

He suddenly lifted both her hands from the
gate, two such fair, womanly hands, without
a ring to tell the sweet story of a lover and
his love.

So suddenly and passionately he seized her
hands that she looked up, half wondering.

"Don't say I overestimate you, Beryl—you,
who are the idol of my life—you, whom I love
with all my heart and soul and strength.
Beryl! you are going away to-morrow, to be
gone a long, long year. Will you leave me
your blessed love? Beryl! will you promise
to be my wife?"

She bowed her head under the torrent of
words, like a lily before a gust. When she
raised it, her splendid eyes were afire in pit-
iful tears.

"Oh, John! John! how it breaks my heart
to hear this from you, knowing it can never
be. Dear John, don't care for it, will you?
try to give it up!"

Her distress was genuine; even among all
the anguish her words caused, he saw that.

"Beryl, tell me how to give you up! How
can I, when you are a part of my life; when
to know you are not to share it takes all the
sunshine from it? Oh, Beryl, my lost dar-
ling!"

He was very pale, and she saw him tremble
as he looked at her, as he fought against the
crushing sorrow. Yet he did not urge her;
he did not press his suit; that would not have
been John Havenleigh, with his great, grand
heart, so full of love for this girl, and equally
as capable of tremendous sacrifice. A moment
of silence, then Beryl's low, sweet voice broke
it.

"I think I ought to tell you why, John. I
don't want you to think it is because you are
not worthy my affection; you are a thousand-
fold better than I; no, hush, John, while I tell
you that—that—that—"

A banner of conscious rose-color waved over
her face, and she averted her head, and toyed
confusedly with a spray of early roses she had
gathered a moment before.

Havenleigh's face was set and stern as a
marble statue; only in his eyes was recorded
the mighty anguish that stirred his soul.

"I understand, I think, Beryl, and although
it is a terrible blow, you are right to tell me
that Clifford Kenneth has won what is denied
me. Beryl! Beryl! you are so dear to me, and
yet he—"

His voice lost itself in a husky moan; then,
for one instant, he looked at her sweet, pitiful
face; looked hungrily at her, as though he
wanted to seize her in his arms and rain kisses
on her rare red lips and ivory-pure cheeks.
Then he bowed adieu.

"I will not see you again. Good-by, Beryl,
my—good-by!"

He did not offer his hand, or look at her
again. Strong man that he was, he dared not
trust himself; then he walked away, into the
lengthening shadows, against the pale, cold
sky, a man who had received a heart-blow
from the hand he loved best on earth.

Beryl watched him, with sad, plying inter-
est, her magnificent eyes full of brooding ten-
derness for the one lover she had rejected;
then, a moment later, flooding with rapturous
ecstasy as Clifford Kenneth came riding up to
the gate—bold, as women like to have their
lovers, handsome as a god, and wearing such a

fascinating air of supreme assurance and con-
fidence.

"Well, Queenie, true to your trust, as
usual! If you knew what a time I've had of
it to get away, I'm sure you would appreciate
it."

He did not dismount, but reined his horse
close beside the gate, and stooped and kissed
her, with an off-hand air of proprietorship that
delighted her.

"You know I always appreciate your com-
ing, Clifford. Should I not to-night, when to-
morrow will divide us so far?"

A little frown of impatience corrugated his
handsome forehead.

"How I do dislike to hear you speak of this
Quixotic idea of yours in such a matter-of-fact
way. Your leaving Havenwood is all non-
sense, anyhow, Beryl. As if you need to de-
pend upon your own exertions in the future
any more than in the past!"

Beryl looked wistfully at him, and caressed
the glossy flanks of her lover's beautiful steed.

"Surely you do not think I can be content
to accept dear old Mr. Havenleigh's bounty
now that the way is open for me to take care
of myself? I do not think I could. Anyhow,"
and she laughed, half-sadly, "it is all settled,
my trunks packed, and to-morrow I leave for
New York to accept the position I mentioned
to you—assistant in Mme. Dijon's College for
Young Ladies."

Kenneth shrugged his shoulders, then stooped
and took the roses from her hand.

"Well, Beryl, of course your will is your
law; but have you taken into consideration
the fact that, in the estimation of my family,
the adopted daughter and heiress of Haven-
wood and Mme. Dijon's assistant are two very
different people?"

He smiled down in her eyes, but could not
exorcise the sudden look of pain and distress.

"Clifford! you mean—you surely do not
mean—"

He laid one hand—so perfectly gloved—over
her mouth.

"I mean, my dearest, that I shall never
cease loving you. Kiss me, Beryl!"

He could sway her so—this proud, strong-
hearted girl, because of his handsome face, and
faultless manner, and graceful, independent
style.

"It must be good-by, Clifford," she said,
a moment later. "Take this bunch of roses,
and if ever the time comes that—that you feel
it inevitably true that Mme. Dijon's assistant
cannot enter your family, send me back the
withered token."

Kenneth laughed, and looked straight in her
eyes as he took the fragrant little *gaze d'amour*.

"You never will see it again, Queenie, you
solemn little darling, you! Another kiss,
Beryl, for the last good-by, and remember, a
letter every Tuesday from me."

Then he rode away; handsome, smiling, and
the girl contrasted him with her other lover,
as he said good-by with white lips.

A little sigh broke from her lips, and she
went slowly up the silent, twilight lane.

"You may take the jewels away, Jeannette,
and the mauve silk. I shall wear black to-
night, with only a spray of natural pink
roses."

It was one of the sweetest of voices that
gave the kindly command, and a rarely glo-
rious face that smiled on the obsequious French
maid.

A pale complexion of ivory purity, and
smooth as marble; with perfectly-chiseled lips
of pomegranate scarlet, and eyes brown, hair
and lashes of dusky darkness. A face, once
known, never to be forgotten—a woman, if once
beloved, never to be again an object of indif-
ference. A face we still remember—a woman
we once knew, with seven years of added
splendor—Beryl Hawthorne, with her proud,
passionful heart as of yore. To-night, there
was an unwonted gleam in her tropical eyes,
and there came tiny, flitting smiles to the per-
fect mouth of often more before—so often
that Jeannette wondered at it, in this grave,
silent mistress of hers who was so beautiful,
so talented, so rich, so sought after, and so ex-
clusive.

The girl lingered curiously after she had ar-
ranged the elegant black silk costume, with its
frills of costly lace at throat and wrists, and
laid out the cream kids, and the golden orna-
ments.

"You may go to the conservatory and se-
lect the pink roses yourself, Jeannette. Come
in a half-hour to arrange my hair."

Then, when alone, she locked her door, and
sat down before her little gold and ebony desk,
and took out an envelope, bearing the marks
of years of handling upon it, and addressed in
an elegant, dashing hand to "Miss Beryl Haw-
thorne, care Mme. Dijon, — 24th st."

She sighed, then smiled as she opened it, and
took therefrom a spray of withered, scentless
roses, that rattled crisply under her gentle
touch, and scattered dried, yellow-brown leaves
over her warm fingers. She laid it down, and
took up another letter, fresh, newly dated, and
addressed in the self-same hand to "Made-
moiselle Del Rosa, No. — Lexington avenue."

A curious expression crossed her face as she
opened it and reread it, for perhaps the twenti-
eth time.

It was a courteous, gentlemanly letter, ex-
pressing the writer's overwhelming admiration
of Miss Del Rosa's wonderful voice, and con-
gratulating her upon the wonderful success
she had achieved. Then, in most happy style,
begged the honor and pleasure of her company
at an exclusive *soiree musicale*, to be given at
"Clifford Kenneth" at a certain date—this same
evening—and signed, as the other letter was
signed—"Clifford Kenneth."

Beryl thought of it all as she sat there, with
the two letters on her desk—thought of all the
romance of her life, from the time she had left
Havenwood, to be an assistant in Mme. Di-
jon's college, to this moment, when she was in
possession of a fortune, a fame and a world-
wide name—the Del Rosa, the silver-throated
soprano whose beauty and talent were so
equally balanced.

She remembered how suddenly she had de-
cided to educate her voice, upon Mme. Dijon's
suggestion; how, while hard at her studies,
there had come Clifford Kenneth's letter, with
the token of the rose-spray, telling its pitiful
story, and teaching her, after the first sharp
pain, that she never really had loved him—
that, what she thought was love had been only
ardent admiration and a gratified sense of an
aesthetic taste.

Then came news of John Havenleigh's de-
parture for foreign lands, news that, somehow,
made her feel very lonely for a while; then,
her debut as a singer; then, rapid successes;
and now—this letter from the man who had
discarded her because she was only an "assistan-
t."

Would she go? she laughed as she heard
Jeannette's step nearing her door. Yes, she
would go, and, face to face, Clifford Kenneth
would know that the glorious Del Rosa and the
woman he had scorned were one and the same
—a fact no one but her own heart knew.

So she dressed in her plain, elegant costume,
and fastened at her throat the very fac-simile
of the roses she had given Clifford Kenneth in
the sunset seven years ago, and went in her
own carriage, behind her own matchless
horses, with her own footman and coachman
in their liveries of olive and gold, to the grand
entrance of "Clifford Kenneth," where she was the
famous guest, to whom all honor was paid.

Radiant as a star, full of the triumph she
knew awaited her, Beryl stood in the shade
of a pillar, in the reception-room, leaning on
the arm of a dapper young millionaire, and
indulgently listening to his twaddle, while
waiting to pay her respects to the hostess and
son—handsome Kenneth, whom she saw for
the first time in years, whom she suddenly
heard cry out in glad surprise, not a yard
from her, but utterly unaware of her near-
ness:

"Is it possible! John Havenleigh, of all
living men! where from under the canopy did
you come?"

Then John's voice—that stirred her so
strangely, sending hot and cold thrills over
her.

"From Havenwood, latterly. From Ger-
many, yesterday. I hope I do not intrude in
venturing to hear the wonderful *prima donna*,
uninvited!"

"Intrude? never! By-the-by, John, *entre-
nous*, Miss Del Rosa has captured me. Such
a divinity you never saw—something of the
same general style as Beryl Hawthorne—you
remember little Beryl, I suppose—only, of
course, a thousand times her superior."

A hard, cold tone came in Havenleigh's
voice.

"I cannot indorse that, Kenneth. To me,
Beryl Hawthorne was the one woman in all
the world. You will not forget to whom I
lost her."

Kenneth laughed carelessly.

"Let bygones be bygones, old fellow.
Granted, I was a little taken with Beryl; it
needn't have followed I must marry a school-
teacher."

"God knows I wish I could have won her!
Kenneth, we won't talk of it, please. There
are wounds time cannot cure. I loved her
then, I love her now, wherever, whatever she
is; and perhaps—God may be merciful to me
yet, and give her to me."

His low, intense voice went straight to
Beryl's heart, taking with it the unimpeach-
able assurance that she loved him. She dis-
engaged her arm from her escort, and stepped
between the two men, a vision of perfect
beauty.

"John—dear old John! God is merciful,
even after seven years! John, he has given
you to me again!"

One moment of speechless bewilderment on
the part of the men, then, a simultaneous cry:
"Beryl Hawthorne!"

"Beryl Hawthorne, to you, John; Miss Del
Rosa, to you, Mr. Kenneth. Do you wish me
to sing? shall it be Balfe's 'Didst thou but
know'?"

Matchlessly proud, beautiful, lovely, she
went among the distinguished guests, who lit-
tle dreamed of the romantic drama that had
been enacted in their midst.

Vials of Wrath:
OR,
THE GRAVE BETWEEN THEM.BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL.
AUTHOR OF "TWO GIRLS' LIVES," "LOVE-
BLIND," "OATH-BOUND," "BARBARA'S
FATE," ETC., ETC.CHAPTER XXII.
THE DISMANTLED HOME.

At the time when Carleton Vincyn and Frank
Havelstock were smoking their cigars on the
after-deck of the "Queen of the Twilight,"
Ethel was sitting in her little parlor, precisely
as her guest had left her, with the papers lying
at her feet, whither they had slid from her
trembling hands. Her head was leaned against
the cushioned back of the *le-tete a tete*, and her
upturned face was whitely still. Her great,
dark eyes burned like twin flames, fed on fuel
of sorrow, and sharp, sudden pain; her golden
hair curled lovingly to her neck and shoulders
as she sat there, so white, so still, in the dark-
ness that lowered over the city streets.

Outside, the street-lamps glowed like evil
eyes through the gloom; she saw the one nearly
opposite her door, and thought, with a thrill
of numbing pain, that it never again
would light his footsteps home. She heard the
tread of occasional passers-by, and realized
there was no one, in all the wide world, to
come to her—the only one she ever had cared
for was lying so still, so far away.

Her feet seemed chained to the floor, her body
pinioned to the sofa, so utterly powerless to
move she was; and so she sat there—rather
crouched there—hour after hour, with her
cold hands lying limply on her lap, her dazed
brain trying to comprehend all the strength of
her affliction.

The little French clock struck nine, and ten,
and eleven; the whole house was in total dark-
ness; a dreary silence was brooding over the
deserted streets and locked-in houses; and yet
she sat there, in all the pangs of her widow-
hood, the victim of a man's foulest conspiracy;
as truly a sufferer as if her dead lay at her
feet.

Finally she arose, tottering, and with her
trembling fingers lighted a lamp, that seemed
only to make the darkness more visible. She
went mechanically around the house, as was
her custom, closing and fastening windows,
and seeing that every thing was in perfect
order, and in readiness for morning.

Then she dragged herself up-stairs to her
bedroom, put the little lamp on the
mantelpiece, and sat down again, in the large
bamboo chair Frank liked to lounge in before
he retired.

So desolate!—oh, so desolate! She drooped
her head on her hands, and commenced another
weary, heart-rending vigil—this young
girl, with not a friend in the world to go to,
to sympathize with her, or to advise, or to as-
sist her.

All that lonely night Ethel never thought
of undressing or retiring; all those long, aw-
fully-lonely hours she sat there, staring her
hard fate in the face, and making up her mind
what to do—since weeping and moaning were
not the ways in which she manifested her
grief.

With dawn, she was weary, haggard, unre-
freshed; but she bravely took up the burden
of life again, although her feet tottered at
every step, and her heart ached with a dumb
sickness that was the very essence of intensity.

She bathed, and made a fresh, simple toilet,
then went quietly down-stairs, and prepared
her breakfast; and if her heart bounded fer-
rely at sight of the vacant place never more to
be occupied, she made no outward sign beyond
a compressing of her lips, or a look of keener
anguish in her sad eyes.

She had resolved to waste not a moment—
for two reasons. One, she felt the necessity
of immediate action in order to save, if possi-
ble, her little hoard intact; the other, she
knew that sorrow preyed most cruelly on un-
employed minds, and she felt she never could
bear her burden in the silence and desolation
of her own home.

Her first act, after clearing away the scarce
tasted meal, and leaving her house in perfect
order, was to collect her money, her few little
valuables, and secure them in her trunk—her
sole worldly possessions could be contained
therein. Then, she changed her dress for a
black one—she had so many of them, that she
had only laid aside at her husband's earnest
request—put on her modest little cashmere
sacque, her black straw hat, trimmed with
plain net, and a jaunty, glossy-black wing,
and started on her first walk into the ways of
the world.

Her first walk, and all alone! It occurred
to her, with a sharp thrill of pain that made
her heart throb, her lips quiver, as she turned
the key in the front door after she left it, and
walked down the street.

She took a car that carried her to a street far
down-town, to a number she wanted—an auc-
tioner's shop, where she made arrangements
for disposing of several articles of furniture
Frank had bought, in addition to that hired
with the house. Afterward, she walked to the
office of the real estate agent who rented the
house, and gave it up, promising the keys in a
day or so, the rent of the unexpired month
serving instead of a notice.

Then her immediate business was done, and
she returned to the forlornly-lonely house
that had been such a paradise to her, to be in
readiness when the second-hand dealer came to
carry away her few goods; that tore her heart
so freshly to part from, and yet, that judg-
ment told her would be useless for her to at-
tempt to afford to keep.

She went out in the small back flower-gar-
den, over which she had spent many happy
half-hours, and gathered all the flowers that
were in bloom—great creamy roses, fragrant
as Araby's spice-laden zephyrs; double-leaved
carnations, pink as a coral; sprays of dainty,
lemon-hued woodbine, and leaves off her thrifty
geranium trees.

She tied them up into a loose nosegay, then
took them up-stairs and put them in her trunk,
crushing them among the delicate linen and
lace until their sweetness stole out in a perfect
burden of perfume.

It was all she could take—the only token of
her idyl that had been so short, so blissful.
It was all that was left her—a bunch of flow-
ers, crushed, bruised, like she was herself; and,
like the flowers, although she was unconscious
of it, she was giving out rarest perfumes of
courage, womanly dignity, and piteous resig-
nation.

She turned to leave the scene—so sacred to
her, because of its associations; she looked
slowly around, with a sort of yearning fond-
ness in her eyes, as if bidding a mute good-by
to the familiar objects. Then, as her glance
rested on the pillow Frank's head had pressed
so often—his handsome head, with its curling
black hair—she darted forward, with a low,
inarticulate cry of pain, and threw herself, in
a perfect abandon of uncontrollable anguish,
on the low, white-draped bed.

She laid her golden head on his pillow, with
a touch that of itself was ronderest caressing.
She kissed it over and over, between sobbing
kisses of his name, and frantic prayers for his
return. She strained it to her breast, in a
tight, fierce grasp, as she would have done her
darling himself if he could only have come
back to her; and the while her hot face flush-
ing, her scalding tears welling faster and faster,
until in a perfect tornado of uncontrollable
agony, she sunk exhausted to her knees, her
head bowed, drooping, where he had lain.

And at that very time, he for whom she
wept and suffered was driving through Tan-
glewood's fairest places, looking into Ida
Wynne's eyes with an intensity that made her
blood tingle as it pulsed through her veins!

CHAPTER XXIII.
LUCIFER EXPLODES HIS MINE.

If ever man had opportunity for proving
the truth of the adage that "Satan never de-
serts his own," that man was Frank Havel-
stock, whose evil designs had flourished every-
where beyond his expectations, and whose pathway
was through flower-strewn sweetness every
step of the way, from the moment he had
turned the balance in favor of his wicked-
ness, and deliberately decided upon his future,
until now, a week after the day Carleton Vin-
cyn had declared her widowhood to Ethel, when
Havelstock was playing the ardent suitor to
Ida Wynne in a manner that left no doubt
in every one's mind that they would very
shortly assume the relation of a betrothed
pair.

Ida was very happy—as much so as a girl
of her rather shallow capacity could be. She
adored her handsome, stylish, graceful, well-
dressed lover because he was handsome, styl-
ish, graceful, and well-dressed.

She did not measure him intellectually, be-
cause her own resources in that direction were
vastly inferior to his; she never dreamed of
criticizing him morally, because her own moral
character was so perfectly unimpeachable
she gave no particular heed to his. Ida, there-
fore, with her little vanities, her petty faults,
her pretty face, her winning ways, her medium
intelligence, glossed gracefully over by her
society manners, her elegant indifference that
not one person in a hundred would have ac-
cepted for the ignorance it really was—was
easily won by a man like Frank Havelstock,
who, aside from personal qualities that could
attract a girl like Ethel Maryl, had bent all
the tremendous force of his bold, unscrupu-
lous nature to secure her.

He had been so wonderfully successful so
far. Carleton Vincyn had proved himself an
invaluable ally, who had accomplished the
grand task of severing the ties between himself
and his wife.

At Tanglewood, not a soul suspected the
double game he was playing. Lexington was
still the same ardent, enthusiastic friend,
delighted with the success of Frank with Ida,
and making the approaching engagement the
one object of his life.

Georgia was a silent observer of the exist-
ing state of affairs, and the confidante, per
force, of Ida. Only once had she attempted to
dissuade the girl from her strong infatuation,
and was met with such a torrent of passionate
reply that she had inwardly vowed never to
repeat the offense.

She had done it so kindly, too, with a per-
fect disinterestedness for the hot-headed girl's
welfare—a pitiful affection that sprung out of
her own bitter experiences; and the result had
been fatal to her own self in a degree she never
dreamed of—for Ida had repeated Mrs.
Lexington's sweet persuasions, in her own em-
bellished way, to her lover, and he, in his
quiet, forcible manner, had spoken very casu-
ally of it to Mr. Lexington, with such addi-
tions as he thought necessary.

As usual, he contrived to inflame Theodore
anew against Georgia, while he conveyed the
impression that he was the mutual friend of
both; and at the same time, rejoiced only as
he saw the gradual widening and deepening
of the gulf between them, that his own hands
might have bridged so easily.

All this while, while Lexington between his
passionate love for Georgia, that refused to be
subjugated, his overweening pride, that could
not admit of forgiveness on his part—while
Georgia was enduring torments compared to
which, her previous misery had been intensest
pleasure—while she was living in daily, hourly
horror of Carleton Vincyn's sudden appear-
ance, thereby aggravating affairs beyond possi-
ble hope of repair; while Ida Wynne was
dreaming her bright, girlish visions of a bliss-
ful future as Frank Havelstock's wife; while
Ethel was bravely, almost stubbornly fight-
ing the somber fate that hit her so hard, and
was living entirely on the memory of a few
weeks of Heaven on earth—all this time the
prime mover in all these affairs, the fiend in-
carnate who was bringing such desolation
wherever his unhallowed presence came, was
resting in the security of his own strength and
power, feeling assured that the victory
would be his, because of the master he
served.

It was one of the peculiarities of this man,
that he had no conscience. By a series of
abuse, he had so seared and calloused all his
perceptions of right and wrong that the time
had come when he never felt regrets. He had
crossed the "dead line," beyond which there
was no moral recovery from the disease of sin.
He had come to that point in his destiny that
we, every one of us, reach one time or another,
that is the turning point; where we have
given us the last, solemn choice between good-
ness and evil, between purity and wickedness,
between hope and despair eternal. He had
come with deliberate feet to the spot that
marked his destiny, and—crossed the dead
line, over which there was no returning; over
which, one's feet were urged downward, down-
ward to eternal ruin, as surely and fatefully
as Doom itself.

So he felt no remorse when he thought of
Ethel, as he frequently did; he never pictured
her inevitable anguish of mind, the terrible
slaughter of her intense affections. Or, if he
did occasionally think of such a state of affairs,
it was with a selfish satisfaction in his own abili-
ty to produce such keen emotions.

He found himself occasionally making com-
parison between Ethel and Ida—never favor-
able to Miss Wynne; and once or twice, for a
brief second, there occurred to him a longing
for Ethel's kisses, the sound of her voice, the
clinging embrace of her arms. That was all
—an almost impalpable tie to what had been
his good angel, but whose influence, that
would have been his salvation, he had destroyed
forever.

He had resolved to at once commence his
courtship of the girl who would be the means
of giving such a goodly prize in his hands;
and, although with his usual prudence and
shrewdness he had no intention of acting pre-
cipitately, he was equally determined to let
no grass grow beneath his feet.

He rather enjoyed his position at Tangle-
wood. He knew by Lexington's own admis-
sion that everything was in readiness regard-
ing the transfer of a portion of the estate, on-
ly awaiting signature to render Frank Havel-
stock an independent moneyed man. He knew
that Ida was to be had for the asking, conse-
quently enjoyed disappointing her until he
was entirely ready to be accepted; so, while
his own personal affairs were precisely as he
desired them, and needed no supervision of
his own, he took advantage of the opportunity
to further his designs on Georgia's happiness,
by keeping his promise to Carleton Vincyn, in
return for favors well done.

Havelstock knew the proposed tactics of
Vincyn to the letter. He knew that Vincyn,
while he had been obliged to admit the truth
of the fact that Georgia Lexington was as leg-
ally Lexington's wife as though he had him-
self been dead, and that therefore he had not
the faintest shadow of a claim upon her; still

How strange it is that Georgia does not appreciate all your nobility of soul."

"And yet I am her inferior, Frank. She is perfect—perfect as an angel. Does it not seem strange to you that I feel so, while yet we are so terribly divided? I love her to distraction, and she must know it, and yet she is as cold as an iceberg."

"It is wrong—terribly wrong. I have often thought of it, and much more than once decided to see her, and plead your cause with an eloquence the subject would lend. It kills me to see you so isolated, so ignored, while I am so happy through you."

Havelstock's tone was full of sympathy that touched Lexington to the heart.

"I am not utterly forsaken while I have such a friend as you, Frank. You, and you only, know our pitiful secret, and to you only I come for comfort, sympathy, advice. And advice I want, just here and now."

Frank gave him a sharp, questioning look. Was Lexington playing straight into his hands? He subdued the triumph that sprang to his sinister eyes, and awaited the question that came, in a half-hesitating voice, that betrayed Lexington's reluctance in asking it.

"Do you think, really think, Frank, that if I go to Georgia again, humbly, and offer her my love, my pardon, and beg hers, she will repulse me? Tell me honestly, Frank; hurt me if necessary."

Havelstock averted his face as if he wanted to hide the emotion he simulated to perfection; he made no answer for a moment; then, when he turned his face around again, Lexington saw signs of pity and sorrow, and stern decision on it.

"You have forced me to a position I hoped never to have occupied. Before her, Lexington, rather than tell you what I know—well, I will not!"

Lexington started up in his chair, his eyes shining with sudden passion under his contracted brows.

"Go on, Frank! I demand your meaning. What you have to say is not your fault or mine. Go on."

His voice was strangely intense, and Havelstock saw the time was come to cast the firebrand that should make the flames of maddest jealousy burst into an unquenchable fire.

"Forgive me, then, when I tell you I have seen your wife meet her lover, at nearly midnight, in the summer-house yonder; I have heard words of passionate endearment; I have heard other appointments for the future. And that is why there is a gulf between you."

His low, tender, yet ringing words had only left his lips when Lexington's head drooped to the table, a groan of anguish on his lips, his frame shivering like an aspen.

For a second there was deathly silence while Havelstock gazed over the stricken man in mute, well-concealed satisfaction. Then Lexington raised his head feebly.

"Frank, it has nearly killed me! Georgia false!—Georgia false, when I would have staked my soul on her loyalty. I am, indeed, desolate—desolate! Frank—her lover—who is he?"

The positive torment in his soul failed to touch Havelstock; and yet he answered so earnestly, so kindly.

"That I do not know. I only caught a glimpse of a large, well-bearded man, dressed like a gentleman, with a voice denoting education and society usage. I remember his tones were very sweet. But, Lexington, I fear I have done an unwise thing. Are you sure I am forgiven? If you knew how I am pained to confess this terrible thing to you, you would wonder how I dared tell you."

"It is best for me to know, and I thank you for placing me where I can defend myself. Only leave me alone a little while."

He pressed Havelstock's extended hand warmly, and then watched him leave the room with eyes that seemed dazed with the scorching fires of jealousy, outraged, insulted love, and just indignation that blazed high and hot in his tortured heart.

And Havelstock walked leisurely down to the croquet ground, where Miss Wynne was practicing her strokes.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY.

FOR HOURS after Havelstock left him alone in the library, Lexington walked the floor in an agony too great for motionless endurance. The suddenness of the blow, and coming as it did from the hand he knew so well, and trusted so implicitly, nearly drove him mad; his passionate worship of the woman who had blighted his life, was only equalled by the blinding horror with which he learned of her perfidy.

His heart was cut to its very core; he was attacked in every salient point by this astonishing news of Havelstock. His deep love was wounded to death; his fierce, unyielding pride outraged and insulted; his jealousy fired frightfully by the knowledge that Georgia vouchsafed to another the favors he had begged in vain. It was not strange that he felt nearly insane as he paced the room, with quick, excited footsteps, as one phase of the affair presented itself; then, with lagging tread and bowed head as he realized the disgraceful shame that had come upon him.

An hour passed; two; three; Lexington heard Ida Wynne's merry, girlish voice in laughing conversation; he heard the click of the croquet balls; and the grave, gentlemanly tones of Havelstock, who, conscious of the probability of scrutiny from the eyes in the library, preserved a half-sad demeanor, that was admirably intended to continue the impression his words had given.

Then there came a gentle rustle of skirts on the stairs, over the marble floor of the grand entrance hall, a heraldry of a presence by a faint perfume of wood violets—and then Mrs. Lexington passed the door of the library, that was partly ajar.

A bitter gloom darkened in Lexington's eyes as she halted, half-hesitatingly, and looked in, her pure, sweet face wearing an expression of such wistful pleading, that was partly negated by the cold, quiet curl of her red lips.

She was dressed with her usual elegance of attire, and Lexington wondered if she ever had looked so fair as now in the dress of unrelieved black lace, without ribbon, or flower to lend brightness or color. Even her jewelry was of dull, dead gold, and yet she was radiant in her full flush of beauty; an angel in face and form; a devil at heart, Lexington said, as she bowed frigidly, and crossed the threshold.

A gentleman by instinct as well as by education, Lexington returned her salutation.

"Come in—you will find a seat by this window very pleasant."

He made an honest effort to appear courteous, but there was an awful turmoil in his heart as he watched her sweep over the green carpet and then sink gracefully in the chair he had designated.

When she had seated herself he walked over to her and stood just before her, his grand face

pale as death, his eyes glittering, and looking her full in the face.

For a moment their eyes met, a deep, ominous silence reigning; then, a groan, the very essence of the anguish of his spirit, came from Lexington's lips.

Georgia raised her brows in quick questioning.

"Mr. Lexington, you are not ill—in pain? You are, surely; let me assist you to a seat."

She seemed to just appreciate the deathly pallor of his face, and her own grew white with apprehension as she rose from her chair and reached her hand to his arm.

He waved her off with a gesture of almost impulsive impatience.

"Sit down. I am not sick. I wish to God I was, even to death. Sit down."

She obeyed, mechanically, while the hoarseness in his voice alarmed her more and more.

"Something is the matter. I beg you tell me."

He suddenly lowered his head so that their eyes were on a level, hers, half frightened, half pleading, in their lovely darkness, his lurid, with the storm gathering over their heads.

"Something is the matter; something I would give all my worldly possessions to know is only a dream—a horrible dream. You know, Georgia, how awfully true it is."

He meant her perfidy; she thought he meant the pitiful misunderstanding between them; and his strange words sent a new thrill of hope through every fiber of her being. Was a reconciliation coming at last, in God's mercy?

"Yes, I know it has been, as you say, awfully true; but let us regard this past as a dream, and let us awaken and begin anew. This, I am penitent to day, and, who vowed never to forgive you again, because you repulsed me so."

She stepped nearer him, her eyes, flashing with a delicious expectancy, a half-trembling smile on her pleading lips.

He gazed at her as if drinking in every feature of her wonderful beauty; stared at her with his gloomy eyes until she dropped her own in sheer confusion.

"So your own lips condemn you—your own fair lips pronounce your falseness; and you stand here, tempting me to madness with your beauty, and daring to ask me to regard it all a dream—daring to ask me to begin anew with you—*you!*"

She retreated again nearer her chair, her face paling, her action rapidly changing from expectation to disappointment, then to curious amazement, then to indignation.

"I am utterly at a loss to comprehend your meaning. Of what do my own lips convict me, save that I love you through all your neglect of me?"

Her words seemed to add fuel to the fire.

"Love—love! How dare you take the word on your lips—*you*, as false as frailty itself! You talk of 'love' for me—of my 'neglect' of you, and ask, in your excellent imitation of innocence, of what your own words accuse you. 'Love' for me, whom you repulsed only to go, unmolested, to the arms of a lover at your charming rendezvous! You dare mention my 'neglect,' when you have been well entertained during my absence. And then say 'regard it as a dream, and begin anew!'"

Georgia listened to his scathing words in an amazement so astounding that she was powerless to move or speak. Her face was white with emotion, her hands were fairly rigid with surprise. In all her spotless purity, all her panoply of highest principle, her spotless virtue, her perfect womanhood, she stood before her husband, listening to words that froze her with fear and horror. At first she could form not the slightest idea of what he meant; her whole soul uprose in honest wrath at the unjust imputation; and then, like a flash of light, came the knowledge that her husband had learned, somehow, of Carleton Vincy's presence at Tanglewood.

The truth fairly crushed her; she sunk down into the chair with a weary, hunted horror over her face and in her eyes; and Lexington saw the sudden change, and interpreted it to her incapability to deny his charge.

Then, with her powerless, her piteous sinking under his own hand, came a transient tenderness for the creature he had hurt. A kinder light shone in his eyes, and there was a spice of softness in his voice.

"Confess, Georgia, that you have disgraced me, and brought confusion on your own head. Tell me all—everything—the worst, and if, in my judgment, you are honest and penitent, and sincere in your protestations to leave your lover and return to the only path wherein a woman can walk with safety, then I may possibly overlook your sin in memory of days when we were so briefly happy."

Georgia had called on all the forces of her mind during the moment her husband was speaking, in order to come to a decision. Should she tell him Carleton Vincy was alive, and thus make him despise her even more than when he first learned she was a divorced woman? She knew his overweening pride on the subject; she knew there was no hope of a final reconciliation if Lexington knew her former husband lived. She knew that Vincy might be brought out, and so, because she owed Lexington so, because she yearned so for his love and confidence again, Georgia made another terrible mistake, was again made the plaything of the Furies, who seemed forever presiding over her affairs.

Lexington waited a moment, wondering at her silence, little dreaming that, to shield his dear head from a blow she knew would nearly kill him, she accepted, in a measure, all the blighting doom he had heaped upon her.

He waited, a gathering contempt and wrath plainly visible on his countenance and in his eyes.

"You have had ample time in which to word your denial, and thereby ward off your lover's head the storm of vengeance which I swear shall be hurled upon. Perhaps, however, you intend confessing your villainy, since denial seems useless."

She looked at him with great, anguished eyes, her lips trembling, her eyes scintillant with a gleam he could barely meet.

She arose from her chair, with a slow, stately motion, and swept over to the side of the table.

She looked strangely unreal, standing with one marble-white hand resting heavily over the cover, her jet-black dress falling in curving gracefulness around her motionless figure, her face as white as if hewn from marble, her eyes so intensely dark and expressive.

Lexington looked at her with sharp pangs of mingling love and hatred, as she spoke in a low, hopeless, anguished voice.

"There is nothing to deny or confess; I am judged and condemned before I am heard. This is not the first time you have wounded me to my heart's core. For such pain I have forgiven you. But this is the first time—and you are the first and only man who ever dared insult me, Mr. Lexington—from this hour everything is eternally over between us."

Her voice faltered at the last words, and

yet, above the wall in her tones was a ring of defiance that told him it was true; there was no hope of peace between them now, whatever there may have been previously.

And so the fate-ordained play went on.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 298.)

"THE HEART'S MASTER-KEY."

BY FRANK M. DIBBIE.

A beautiful, fragile vase was she; I feared to touch the molded form, tinged with life glow, rosy, warm. Thinking 'twould break as brittle glass To atoms, in my fierce love-grasp; So rarely fine was its fashioning. The purple and linen of proudest king, Seemed coarse to wrap this dainty thing.

A delicate, opening floweret, she—So tender, a rude, chill wind would shake The "daring bud"; a breath awake The timid life in the virgin heart, Cradling, perchance, love's embryo dart—Not passion's break in its torrid mood. 'Twould scorch the germ it would have wooed To blooming, glorious womanhood.

A voice-dowered, vaulting songster, she; At morn she trilled her matin lay. At twilight, her notes of praise So soft, so full, so rich, I ween Her home must be in the wildwood green. Ah, she's human! she stops to see Her face in the brook on the daisied lea; But, bird or human, she's not for me!

A distant, floating cloudlet, she—Far off in her untouched, peerless grace With an airy step, a pearly face, Beaming eyes like heaven's own blue, Soaring away from my sight strained view, Seeming to beckon, then slip away Like a white cloud that lay On the sky's fair breast in mimic play.

Fabulous in her worth was she—And the price I would pay for this relic rare Bequeathed to earth from regions fair Was Love! ah, then I thought How much with alloy that gem was wrought. Then a whisper dropped from realms above Like softest notes of a cooling dove: "Woman was given to man to love!"

Nick Whiffles' Pet:

NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAVE VISIT. NICK WHIFFLES, who never meant to cultivate the niceties of speech, and when he came in the presence of Ned Mackintosh he quickly uttered the words that were upon the end of his tongue.

"I seed' Woo-wol-na, and he tells me that the gal is dead!"

"WHAT!" demanded the young man, recollecting and staring at him, as if he doubted the evidence of his senses.

"That's what he says, but I don't believe it; curse his pinter!"

The lover drew a sigh of relief.

"How you startled me! Tell me all you have learned about it."

The hunter then proceeded to relate what the reader has already learned, adding:

"He said that Miona died a week ago, and was buried near the village, and if I wanted him, he would show me her grave."

"What did you say to the soundrel?"

"It come on me so sudden like, that I b'lieved it, and started to see you; but as I come through the woods, I had time to think of it, and I made up my mind he had told me the biggest kind of a lie."

"But, Nick, maybe they have killed her, rather than let her fall into the hands of her friends," said the horrified Mackintosh, who could scarcely control his emotion.

"A week ago! why that was the day she met you!"

"Jess so, and that's why I know she isn't dead—leastwise of no disease. That's this about it: they've been expecting me, and the cunning old varmint has got up the story to put me off the track, thinking that I would give up all hope of gettin' her, and leave her to become the wife of Red Bear, seein' as you was out of the way."

"Do you think Miona is in the village?"

"No; she can't be now, at least."

"Where is she?"

"I don't know; Woo-wol-na has took her to some place and left her in the keeping of some one—where she's goin' to stay till they think there's no danger of my looking any more for her, and then she'll be turned over to Red Bear."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the excited Mackintosh, "what an outrage! I wish I had an army to wipe out that nest. What pleasure it would give me to do it! How are we going to find where she is?"

"I think it can be done," replied Whiffles, with his old confidential manner.

"If she is kept as a sort of prisoner somewhere, I s'pose she will be visited by Red Bear?"

"Exactly, and all we've got to do is to watch the varmint, or some of the rest, and follow 'em."

"That's it!" exclaimed Ned, quite delighted; "after all it may be the best thing in the world for us, and make it all the more easy for us to get her out of their clutches."

"All very well—but this sort of work has got to be done mostly by Calamity and me, for when you're trying to find the trail of a wolf, and a pack of wolves are huntin' fur your own trail, there's apt to be a condemned difficulty in the way."

It had been gradually growing darker while the men were talking, and they now sat down in the wood, close to each other, where their words would not be likely to attract the attention of any who might be lurking near.

They had plenty of food with them, but both were too excited to think of food or drink. They could only discuss the unexpected phase which the matter had taken, and the best way of overcoming the obstacles that now were in their path.

Further thought only served to convince Nick Whiffles of the truth of the suspicion he had expressed regarding Woo-wol-na. A man who understood Indian character as well as did he, could hardly be expected to make a mistake in such a matter.

He knew that the hearts of both father and son were set upon gaining this priceless jewel as their own, and they were ready to do anything to accomplish that purpose. Nick had doubted the honesty of the Blackfoot chief at the time he made the promise years before, and he had now not a particle of doubt of his intended treachery.

There was one advantage gained by the whites. The manner of Nick when he received the startling announcement from Woo-wol-na was such as to convince the chief that his words were believed, and consequently that all attempts would be given over by the friends of Miona, looking to the obtaining possession of her.

Nick determined to work upon this vantage-ground, and, with characteristic sagacity, he resolved to confirm the Blackfoot in this im-

pression. He told Ned, that on the morrow he would visit the village again, would ask to see the spot where Miona was buried, and would so act as to remove all suspicion from the mind of their enemy.

"I'll have the old serpent will be looking for me to-night," said he. "I come away in such a hurry that I didn't think any of 'em got a chance to follow me, but they will be on the look-out to-night."

"They certainly cannot discover us in such an out-of-the-way place as this."

"Not if we take care of ourselves—so I'll just pull the boat up out of the way where they won't be likely to run agin' us."

Stepping down, the trapper drew the canoe clear up on the grass, so that none of it rested in the water at all.

He had scarcely done so when Calamity gave utterance to a low, ominous growl.

"Sh!" whispered his master; "we haven't been none too soon. What is it, pup?"

The dog added one or two mutterings, so faint they were barely audible, but they were sufficient for Nick, for they told him that Indians were close at hand.

Including his ear, the trapper now detected the faint dip of paddles—so faint indeed as to prove that the red-skins were advancing with unusual caution, and that at that moment they were near. Nick made a gesture of silence, and Calamity instantly became as one dead, while, as a matter of course, Ned did not stir.

Whiffles reached the edge of the water, on his hands and knees, and carefully peered out in the darkness. The gloom was too great for him to see with any distinctness, but guided by his sense of hearing, he managed to discern the outlines of a shadowy boat, moving very slowly up-stream, and only a few feet away from land. As it came directly abreast, he observed four Indians seated in it.

At this precise point they halted, so near that he could have tossed his hat into the boat, and then they exchanged a few words. As they used their own tongue, and were so close, Nick had no difficulty in comprehending their words, which, liberally interpreted, were as follows:

"He came up the river, and the trappers said he had a companion with him."

"Did you find where he went?"

"We lost him in the wood, but he lingers somewhere near us."

"He is the friend of Woo-wol-na?"

"But the enemy of Red Bear."

Nick Whiffles recognized Red Bear himself as the one who uttered this last remark, and it proved that he and his three companions were seeking himself and Mackintosh, unsuspecting of his real identity, for the purpose of putting them out of the way, and ending all trouble regarding Miona.

The Blackfeet exchanged a few words more of speculation upon the whereabouts of the two men, and then they gradually drifted down-stream beyond hearing.

What Nick Whiffles had seen and heard now fully decided his course. He had not a particle of doubt that Miona had been removed from the village and was held a close prisoner in some lodge or place at no great distance, and before anything could be done in rescuing her it was necessary to ascertain where this place was.

Furthermore, it was evident that the Blackfeet were not convinced of the success of their stratagem in making it appear that their captive was dead, and Red Bear, the one among them most interested, had resolved on putting out of the way the old friend of his father, and the companion who was with him.

Hence, as preliminary to any step in this business, it was necessary to throw dust in the eyes of the Blackfeet; and this Nick Whiffles determined to do effectually and at once.

He determined, therefore, at the earliest break of day on the morrow, boldly to enter the Blackfoot village alone, and there ask of Woo-wol-na to see the grave where Miona was buried. Then it was his purpose to affect such a belief in her demise, as would effectually deceive the Indians.

After which, working with his usual caution and skill, Nick believed himself competent to detect the hiding-place of Miona, then, he and Ned would engage in the "tug of war."

This course of action agreed upon, the old trapper returned to the edge of the river to watch and listen for the return of the Indian canoe, but he heard nothing of it, and concluded that it had crossed over and descended upon the opposite side.

As there was no likelihood of being discovered, they then lay down to rest, Calamity as before acting the part of sentinel. He secured all the sleep he wished through the day, so that it was no deprivation or hardship for him to keep awake during the night, even though his years were beginning to press rather heavily upon him.

The slumbers of both were undisturbed, and both awoke, much refreshed and in good spirits. Ned Mackintosh especially found himself the possessor of a pleasant degree of hopefulness in great contrast to his sensations of the day before.

The last of their food was eaten, and by the time the sun had fairly risen, Nick was paddling down-stream, with a slowness that became one engaged upon such a sad expedition as was he.

The first persons he encountered upon landing at the village, were Woo-wol-na and Red Bear, who stood together talking earnestly upon some subject. At sight of the visitor they instantly ceased. Nick Whiffles' knowledge of human nature was too great for the young Blackfoot to hide his vindictive hatred of the man who was seeking the prize that he had come to believe belonged to him alone.

Woo-wol-na, on the contrary, was quite gracious in his manner, and seemed to entertain a genuine regard for the old hunter, who so many years before had done him such valuable service when hard pressed by his enemies; but, savage-like, his whole interests were wrapped up in those of his son, and he was prepared to sacrifice anything or anybody who stood in the way of their accomplishment.

Nick greeted him in the usual formal manner customary at such times, and then questioned him regarding the death of Miona.

How long since did it occur? Of what character did her disease appear to be? How long was she sick? Did she seem to suffer much? Did she leave any parting messages for her friends?

These inquiries were all made for the purpose of deceiving the chief into the belief of their sincerity.

The reply in substance was that she had died a week before. The symptoms, as he described them, were those of a violent fever, short and occasioning great suffering. The medicine-man of the village had done all that was possible for her, and her death was sincerely mourned by the entire village, who were all attached to her. As her mind was wandering during the entire time of her sickness, she left

no tangible message for any of her pale-faced friends who might seek her.

Then Nick stated that he would like to visit her grave before carrying word to her home many miles away. Woo-wol-na volunteered at once to lead him to it, and the two started. As is well known, it is the frequent custom of the Indians of the North-west to bury their dead above ground—that is, by placing them upon a sort of scaffold, where they are carefully wrapped up and left to decay by the action of time and the elements. This is often done, but, at the same time, as many, if not more, are placed beneath the sod, more after the manner of civilized life.

Woo-wol-na conducted the visitor to a beautiful spot about a tenth of a mile distant, where there was the appearance of a newly-made grave, where, he said, Miona had been buried amid the lamentations of all the warriors and maidens of his tribe.

Then, with unexpected deference, the old chief withdrew and left him alone with his sorrow.

Knowing that he was carefully observing him all this time, the trapper affected a great deal more of grief than he felt, and when he had remained a proper time he bade the grave farewell, and was escorted to the village by the chief, where he embarked in his canoe again and started up river. Ned was taken in a secret manner, and by lying down in the canoe was not observed by the lynx-eyed Blackfeet watching the trapper far on his way. The shrewd old man so well knew that he would thus be under surveillance, that he resolved to return all the way to his cabin and thus disarm the red soundrels of all suspicion both of Ned's existence and of his (Nick's) own want of faith in their story regarding Miona's death.

He chuckled with a satisfaction so hearty that, cautious as he was by nature and training, he could hardly refrain from a good, loud laugh, as he paddled away, hour by hour, while the red-skins, with almost superhuman efforts, kept along like shadows on his path.

"Trot along, ye greasy vagabones!" he said, in a low tone; "we'll give yer a twist that'll make yer devil's face look worse'n that hole ye dropped my boy in."

Silently, steadily he paddled, keeping Ned close and quiet in the canoe bottom, until they neared the cabin, when the old man permitted the younger to take the blade, which he did in silence, while faithful Calamity, like a grim sentinel, stood in the canoe's bow as if to relieve his old master from all further responsibility.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BACK TRAIL.

"Now," said Nick, as they sat down in the cabin, "we can turn about and go back agin. We've got rid of the condemned difficulty that we had."

"And all this time what is poor Miona suffering?" replied Ned, resting his hand upon his elbow, and looking the very picture of misery.

"She ain't sufferin' half as much as you," replied Nick, who, like a thoughtful host, was preparing a meal for two very hungry men. "She don't know she's dead, or that we think she's gone under."

"But how she must long for our coming! What weary years of waiting she has spent, and now she does not know whether they are to end or not. When do we start down stream again?"

"It will be dark in an hour; we can make a good supper by that time, and I'll take a week's food with

for, above all things, it was now important that they should not be seen by any of their enemies.

The greater part of the day was spent in stealing along in this cautious manner, constantly on the look-out for their enemies. Near the middle of the afternoon, they had a narrow escape from running directly in sight of a large canoe full of Indians, but, fortunately, they "backed water," and ran in, under cover of the bank in time to escape discovery.

Just at nightfall the mouth of the creek was reached, and they landed. The boat was pulled up out of sight, and Calamity was left to guard the entrance, and the two withdrew out of sight altogether of any who might pass during daylight even.

Young Mackintosh could scarcely conceal his anxiety and impatience. If Nick had settled in his mind where they were to look for Miona, he saw no reason why they should not press on at once and take time by the forelock.

"We expect to make our search there, Nick, and why wait until our foes are ahead of us?"

"Trust to me, trust to me," was the reply. "It may be that the Red Bear will come down the creek to-night, and, if that is so, we'll run afoul of him, as sure as the world."

"Why not go overland? It's only a matter of ten miles or so, and we can make it in a couple of hours."

"And leave a trail that'll be certain to betray us."

"Well, as you please then," replied Ned, settling himself back, in the expectation of spending a number of weary hours.

"You ought to have learned the value of patience when you was Ned Hazel, trampin' in the woods with me. Don't you know the Esquimaux of the upper Hudson Bay will set for a dozen hours by their hole in the ice waiting for the seal to come up and get spitared?"

"I hope you don't expect we are going to do the same?"

"Not unless it is necessary, but we must wait; the Whiffles family always had the faculty of waiting. Fact of it was, some of 'em waited too long, and, for all I know, some of 'em are still waiting—Hullo!"

At this juncture, Calamity gave utterance to a low, almost inaudible growl, and springing to their feet, both the men were at his side in an instant.

The faint moon, of which Nick had spoken, had risen, and was already overhead, so that they could both see to the opposite side of the narrow creek.

"Sh!" whispered the trapper, "some one is comin', sartin'."

The ripple of oars was plainly discernible, and while they were straining their eyes to pierce the gloom, they saw a small canoe, with two Indians in it, making its way upstream.

It was near the center of the creek, and moving in a manner which showed the occupants had no fear or thought of discovery upon the part of convays or interlopers.

Nick was especially anxious to learn whether one of the men was Red Bear or not, but there was not sufficient light for the purpose, although he was satisfied in his own mind that the young chief was in the boat.

The two men scarcely breathed until the canoe had passed up out of sight. Then the trapper noiselessly launched his own canoe, and entering, Calamity was placed in the bow.

"The pup can see further in the dark than his master, and when he can't see one of the varmints, he can scent him. You see, it won't do to run afoul of Red Bear."

"Why won't it do?" demanded Ned. "There are as many in this boat. We have rifles, and I carry a Colt's revolver. We could put both of them out of our path as well as not."

"Like to do it?"

"Why, you've as many gray hairs in your head as I have, you won't be quite so eager to send a ball through the head of any critter that happens to cross your path."

"You won't shrink from it if it should become necessary?"

"Exactly; but it hasn't become necessary, Ned; if Woo-wol-na keeps in his way, I'd shoot him; but if we can get the gal out of their hands without harming a red-skin, I'm going to do it. When I was on my first war-path, it was just the other way, but I kin tell you, Ned, this killing people is a bad business, any way you can fix it, and to my mind, any man is guilty that wants to do it."

"You are right," replied Ned, who could but agree with the humanitarian sentiments of the old hunter, who could pass through so many scenes of violence and bloodshed, and still, like a Christian warrior, retain a yearning love for peace and quietness.

"My whole heart is bent on gaining Miona from their hands," added the lover. "I have prayed and longed for this day; I can never leave American territory without her, and I will stop at no danger or sacrifice to accomplish my purpose."

"Just so," replied the imperturbable Nick, as he softly dipped his paddle and kept the boat to its course. "Your heart is full of love, and when a man is in that kettle I take it that he's blind to prudence and common sense. If you was to undertake this business alone, the end of it would be that you would have your hair raised, and would go under afore you had fairly started."

The sober thought of Mackintosh admitted the truth of all the trapper had uttered, and he could not refuse to acquiesce in his cool judgment and prudent deliberation.

All this time the canoe was moving up the creek with the silence of some aquatic monster stealing his way through a gambit of enemies to some safe retreat in the ocean beyond. There was little likelihood of the boat ahead checking its speed, or being overtaken by its pursuer; but nevertheless there was a possibility, and Nick Whiffles was not the one to let his haste run him into any "condemned difficulty" of that nature.

Calamity showed a realizing sense of the responsibility that rested upon his canine shoulders. Sitting on his haunches, with his forepaws resting upon the gunwale of the prow, he peered into the darkness, every sense on the alert for the dusky foes in advance.

The sound of a rustling leaf did not escape, nor did it deceive him. He had hunted and roamed too many years with his master; a need any instruction at this late day. Nick knew exactly what the capabilities of the brute were, and precisely how far he was to be depended upon; so, while he kept the canoe cautiously gliding up one bank, he found time to hold whispered converse with his companion, scarcely looking ahead, but leaving that duty to his faithful friend.

While drawing near the spot where they believed the beautiful, the loving, the trusting Miona was longingly awaiting their coming.

Ned Mackintosh became silent and thoughtful. The belief that the critical moment for which he had been waiting through four long, weary years, was at hand; that she toward

whom his thoughts had turned, during all that time, when the broad ocean rolled between them, was now within a few miles, and that every moment was drawing them nearer together, filled him again with a nervous uneasiness, which he controlled with much difficulty, and which did not escape the observant eye of the old trapper.

"You must git over that," admonished the latter, "for if you don't, you won't be good for any thing, and I'll leave you ashore."

He strove manfully, and after a time he gained more mastery over himself.

"I will be all right when the time comes," he replied.

"The time has come now," said Nick, as with one sweep of his paddle he ran the prow against the land, and stepped out.

"What does this mean?" asked Ned, in some astonishment.

"Them lodges that I was talking about ain't two hundred yards from this spot?"

"Is it possible?" was the exclamation of the young man, as he stepped out; "and what are we to do now?"

"You're to lay here, while me and the pup go forward and rackynoteer a little; and, Ned," he added, in his most impressive manner, "do you promise to mind me to the very letter?"

"Of course I do."

"All right; then don't move six feet from here till I give you word. I'll be back soon."

The next minute Ned Mackintosh was alone.

About an hour passed, when Nick Whiffles returned with the noiselessness that characterized all his movements, and stooping down beside his young friend, he placed his hand upon his shoulder, and said:

"Ned, we've found the place where the varmints have hid the gal!"

CHAPTER IX.

A FINGER ON THE TRIGGER.

AFTER making his startling announcement to Ned Mackintosh, Nick Whiffles explained it in substance, as follows:

Upon leaving him in company with Calamity, the two had moved stealthily forward, until they reached the desolate clearing where stood the "ruins" of what had once been a large and stirring Blackfoot village. These ruins consisted of three lodges only, in two of which lights were burning. In one of these were seated Red Bear and two warriors, the three engaged in smoking and discussing some important matter.

There was difficulty in gaining a view of the interior of the other, as the entrance was closed; but, after lying down in front of it for a half-hour, it was opened, and an old squaw, that Nick recognized as the mother of Red Bear, came out and went to the lodge in which were seated her son and his three companions.

This was the very lodge in which Nick Whiffles had lain an invalid more than thirty years before; and, as the buffalo-skin door was pulled aside, he saw, plainly and distinctly, Miona seated upon the ground, in front of a small fire, engaged in knitting some bead ornament. The firelight shone full upon her face, so that there was no mistake about it.

"Nick," said Mackintosh, at this point in his narrative, "as you love me, grant me one favor."

"What is it?"

"Take me to the spot where you crouched, when you saw her, there let me stay one minute and look upon her face!"

"But the danger—"

"You can trust me. Remember I have not seen her for four years. I can be as quiet and stealthy about it as you!"

"Well, I'll do it. Come along!"

They stole their way through the wood and across the clearing in the direction of one of the lodges, in which a light could be seen shining, moving with the stealth of men who knew that a single false step would be paid by the penalty of their lives.

The whole affair was in opposition to the sense of Nick Whiffles, but he could not well refuse the request of his young friend, made as it was with such direct earnestness to him.

Finally Nick paused and whispered:

"Crawl to that spot, and lay flat down, and if the gal hasn't changed her position, you'll see her face a blamed sight plainer than you can see mine."

Ned did as requested, and complete success crowned the effort. He saw Miona seated in front of a fire engaged with some fancy work, and seemingly as quiet and unsuspecting as though seated among her own friends.

Her head was bent, so that the view was not as good as could be desired; but such as it was, it made the heart of the lover bound with delight.

Ay, there she sat; the loved of his heart; she of whom he had dreamed for the four years past, and for whom he had hastened to cross the ocean—she who returned his yearning affection, and who, he fondly believed, was at that moment thinking of him as yet far away from her.

The wish of Mackintosh was that she would raise her head, before he was compelled to withdraw, and this pleasure was also afforded him.

While his eyes were intently fixed upon her countenance, she suddenly looked up, as if some noise at the entrance of the lodge had attracted her attention. This afforded the very view for which Ned was so anxious. There was a startled expression upon the face of Miona, that rendered her beauty more striking. The lustrous eyes looked darker, and the excitement gave a flushed appearance that rendered her captivating in the highest degree.

"Oh! if she but knew I were here!" sighed my hero, who felt an almost irresistible impulse to rush forward and claim her, "if she would but come forth, and go with us at once!"

In a moment she lowered her gaze again, and resumed her work; and feeling that it was incumbent upon him to do so, Mackintosh withdrew and rejoined the trapper.

"Now I s'pose you feel easier," remarked the latter, as they stealthily retreated to the cover of the woods again.

"Yes, and I am thankful to you for the kindness you showed me. I had a good view of her face. And now what do you propose to do?"

"We must wait here, and find out what they're driving at. We mought get the gal, but it won't hurt to wait awhile, and it's better to be sartin afore you move in such a matter."

Nick supposed he was right, but it was very hard to be governed by the same deliberation, at a time when he believed that a bold dash would end the matter at once in their favor, but he forced himself to assent and wait the pleasure of his old friend.

The entrance to the other lodge remained closed, so that it was impossible to tell what was going on in there; but there was little doubt that their consultation concerned Miona.

It was very easy, and would have been very characteristic in Red Bear to use force in compelling her to become his wife; but it seemed that he hesitated at this step, until it became certain that no other means would succeed.

Nick Whiffles more than once was on the point of stealing forward and apprising Miona of their presence so that she might be prepared to second any movement in her own behalf; but he resolutely restrained himself.

However, he thought the time had come when Calamity could take a hand in the business, and he turned to Ned.

"Have you got pencil and paper?"

"Yes."

"Then git something ready, and we'll try and send the pup in with it."

Mackintosh was glad enough to do so, and as well as he could in the darkness, he penned the following:

"DEAREST MIONA:

"Nick and I are near you, watching for a chance to get you out of the hands of your enemies. By the assistance of you and him I was saved from death in the cavern. He has been to see Woo-wol-na, who told him that you were dead. As you already know, the old chief is determined that you shall be the wife of Red Bear, and has attempted to deceive us; Nick let him think he believed his falsehood, but we understood him. You have been removed here, so as to be without the reach of your friends. You must remain quiet, and it will be well to affect an acquiescence to whatever wishes they may have regarding you. I await Nick's movements, who is slow, but who doubtless knows better what to do than I. If you can, send me a few words back."

E. M."

This, with a piece of paper from his notebook and his pencil, was fastened around the neck of Calamity, so that she might have an opportunity to reply.

As there seemed to be no dogs at all belonging to the Blackfeet in the village, there was considerable risk in sending Calamity upon such an errand. If seen, he would be recognized as belonging to Nick, and the extraordinary precautions that the two had taken, during the preceding few days, would thus be entirely thrown away.

But there was no one to whose sagacity it was safer to trust than to this same canine. He knew the value of keeping himself "scarce" at such a time, and, if there was any possible way of doing it, he might be depended upon to do it.

Nick took pains to explain with great particularity what he expected his animal to do, and then told him to go.

Calamity advanced straight toward the clearing, until he had passed half-way across, when he paused and looked about him to see if the coast was clear. Everything seemed satisfactory, and he kept straight ahead, and the next instant darted into the door of the lodge.

As he did so, Nick, who had stolen back to his former position, and was watching, saw her start, utter a slight scream, and make ready to combat the entrance of the dog, but the next instant she recognized and welcomed him, hastening forward to take the paper from his neck.

Then she read it with an eager interest impossible to describe, and when finished, raised her eyes devoutly upward, thanking Heaven for the answer to her prayer. Then, with pencil in hand, she leaned over toward the fire, and busied herself in replying to the missive of her lover.

"By mighty! ain't she givin' him a good dose?" muttered Nick, as he saw her turn it over, after the lapse of several minutes, and continue her rapid penmanship upon the other side of the leaf. "Wal, I s'pose the gal loves him, and of course she must have a good deal to say to him."

By-and-by it was finished, and then she fastened it very carefully to the neck of the dog, securing with it the pencil also, and made ready for the return of her faithful express.

At this critical moment, the door of the other lodge opened, and Red Bear issued forth, walking straight toward the one where Miona and the dog were sitting. It was a dangerous instant, and looked as if discovery were unavoidable. There was no way for Calamity to slip out, without being seen by the chief, who would be certain to identify him at the first glimpse.

Nick Whiffles steadily raised the hammer of his rifle, prepared to fire at Red Bear if the discovery should take place, for it now looked as if it was to come to that.

But the wonderful sagacity of Calamity proved equal to the emergency. His sharp ear detected the approach, and he seemed to comprehend at the same instant that it was impossible for him to escape from the lodge.

As quick as a flash, he whisked behind Miona and crawled beneath the skins, upon a pack of which she was sitting.

Nick Whiffles witnessed this maneuver of his dog, with a grin of exultation, and then carefully made his way back to where Ned was awaiting him. Here he related what he had seen, adding:

"The pup knows more than both of us; trust Calamity, I say, for the pup has never deceived me yet."

He then said there was no telling how long Red Bear might remain in the lodge, and if Mackintosh chose, he could take his old position and watch the interview. This the young man gladly did, and found his place such that he had a full view of both.

Miona still had her seat upon the skins, and Ned fancied that she had so spread out her dress as to help hide Calamity. Red Bear sat several feet away, his face turned full upon the girl, and the appearance of both showed that they were engaged in earnest converse.

Miona had probably taken lessons from the note sent her by her lover, and her heart was so full of "new-fledged hope" that she could suppose a graciousness of manner toward the Blackfoot, even though she knew he was soon to have so rude an awakening.

He had a large pipe of yellow clay in his mouth, and undoubtedly was doing his "level best" to persuade the beautiful young pale-face to become his queen, and to forget her ties of blood and kindred, in the happiness of a consort of so brave a warrior as himself.

Miona listened, and was more disposed to be lenient than she had ever yet showed herself in his presence, and the red scamp was in high feather over his good fortune.

But Miona unconsciously incurred a danger in encouraging Red Bear too much. If her manner was such as to make him believe that she would be proud to become his wife, he saw no reason why she should delay so long in taking that position. He wished her to join him and his warriors in his canoes, and with him go to the village down the river, there to go through the impressive ceremony of marrying the most celebrated young warrior of the Blackfoot tribe.

Miona was not prepared to consent to this, and she asked for a delay of twenty-four hours at least; but Red Bear had already submitted to her whims until his patience was well-nigh exhausted.

He used all the persuasive eloquence of an Indian lover to induce her to change her mind; he said that Woo-wol-na was expecting their coming at the town that very night; that he expected the ceremony would be celebrated without fail, and there was danger in thwarting the wishes of such a great man. His boat was ready, and if Red Bear had only known the Ossian Serenade, there is little doubt but that he would have sung,

"Oh, come with me, in my light canoe,
Where the sea is calm and the sky is blue,
Oh, come with me for I long to go
To the isles where the mango apples grow."

As may be supposed, young Mackintosh was a deeply interested spectator of the scene. Of course, it was beyond his power to comprehend with any certainty the meaning of the words uttered, but the actions and gesticulations of each showed that there was considerable feeling and that it was increasing.

Perhaps the consciousness that she had friends near at hand, made Miona somewhat bolder and more defiant than she would have been otherwise. Certain it is that she had begun by heeding the request of her lover, and had been unusually bland and conciliatory. This, however, had produced the opposite effect from what was intended, and he had made urgent demands for her to leave this "country side" at once.

She had dallied with him as long as she could, and finding herself unable to convince him of his error, she had ended by flatly refusing to accompany him.

Red Bear rose from his seat in his anger and gesticulated savagely toward her. At this juncture Calamity whisked out of the lodge so skillfully that even Miona herself did not see him, and hurried straight to his master with the missive about his neck.

Mackintosh would have hastened to the animal to claim the precious letter he bore, had he not been enchained to the spot by the threatening character of the interview between the Indian and the loved one of his heart.

There was no telling but what the savage, in his fury, might offer her violence, and he felt it incumbent to remain near enough to protect her.

"Let the dusky scoundrel but attempt to lay his hand upon her," muttered Ned, as he cautiously brought his rifle round to position, "and I'll crack that shaven skull of his quicker than lightning."

Red Bear gesticulated furiously, but as he still held no weapon in his hand, Mackintosh reserved his fire. He seemed to be arguing vehemently to Miona, who sat quiet and collected, still engaged in her bead-work, and only now and then looking up in his face.

What her replies were could only be divined, but the passion of the Indian seemed to increase, until there could be no doubt that the girl was really in danger. Suddenly Ned saw a knife gleaming in his hand, and he felt that it would not do to delay longer.

So he aimed straight at the head of the Blackfoot chief.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 295.)

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THAT PULL-BACK DRESS.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

She wore a pinned back dress,
One of the modern style,
And looked like those Egyptians old
On tombs along the Nile.
And when I saw her on the street,
In midst of fashion's din,
I bit my lips for fear I'd say—
"That's a little bit too thin!"

In other days I knew her
Ere this contracted dress
Had come to take that rounded form
Terrifically less;
But now I turned aside and wept,
And sorrowfully mused,
To see how very much in life
My darling was reduced.

It was a pull-back dress—
One of the tightest kind;
It must have taken all her maids
To pull it back and bind;
And then so very tight it was,
And with such little slack,
That when she'd take a forward step
It made her take one back.

She started in a dry-good store
To buy some silks and lace;
That pull-back dress it interfered,
And drew her from the place;
And when with pain she got into
A millinery store,
That dress pulled back so very tight
It drew her through the door.

She started to an artist's room
To get her photograph,
But she could not ascend the stairs,
And made the people laugh.
That dress so very tight was pinned,
And made her gait so awkward
Ward that but once in half a square
Her feet touched on the walk.

It lifted her across the mud,
And pulled her back so strong
That any step that she could make
Was not two inches long.
And if she stumbled and fell down,
So powerful was the strain,
That dress would lift her up and put
Her on her feet again.

Alas, there came a shower of rain!
Her little parasol
It could not keep from off her dress
The little drops at all;
She could not step into a store;
And sorrowful to think
That very pinned-back dress of hers
Straightway began to shrink.

So fast did it consolidate,
So tightly was it pinned,
That people looked at her and said,
"How beautifully she's thinned!"
It drew her up to nothing,
And the jury's verdict came—
"Pulled back, but only seen ahead,
With but herself to blame!"

What Was It?

BY EREN E. REXFORD.

FORMERLY, when people asked me if I believed in ghosts or spirits, I used to answer very emphatically, *No!*

Now, if I am interrogated on the subject, I answer that I do not know. From which you will see that my belief has been shaken. Shall I tell you about it?

I had never thought much about such things. Sister Elsie and I lived alone, and I, being a practical sort of woman, had the oversight of everything, and consequently little time to indulge in speculations about visitants from other worlds, if I had been inclined to do so by my tastes. Which I was not.

One evening, Mr. Farleigh, a friend of ours, came in to spend an hour or two, and brought a friend with him. Max Lovel was a young author, whose poems and stories I had read, and often wished I could know. And as for sister Elsie, she was half in love with him before she ever saw him.

Somehow our conversation turned on the subject of ghosts. I think we had been talking about Poe and his wild, strange stories, and you know it is an easy transition from Poe to spirits and ghosts. I think they must have haunted him day and night.

I declared my unbelief in strong terms, and ridiculed the idea of anything so improbable and unlikely as the spirits of the dead coming back to earth.

At first, Max Lovel had but very little to say on the subject, but I saw that he was greatly interested in the conversation. Suddenly Elsie turned to him and asked him what he thought.

"I believe in ghosts," he answered, quietly. "I disagree with your sister's opinion entirely. I think it quite probable—more so than many other things that are continually happening around us—that spirits from another world can come to us."

Farleigh laughed at his friend's earnestness. "I never saw anything of the ghostly order myself," he said. "But I have heard so much said on the ghostly side of the question that I am not prepared to express my disbelief in ghosts as strongly as Margaret has."

"I should like to ask what grounds you have for your belief," I asked Lovel.

"I hardly know myself," he answered. "I don't know that I have any grounds for belief, except a firm conviction existing in my own mind that such things as spirits do sometimes make themselves visible to mortal eyes. I have never doubted but that there are really such things as ghosts. I never saw one, but that is no proof to me that there are no such things, nor that other people have not seen them."

"I should like to see one," said I, incredulously. "Then I might believe."

"I should like to know if there were such things," Elsie said, with a little shiver of awe. "But seeing a ghost—that's quite another thing."

"I will believe when I see one, and not before," I declared.

When our visitors were gone, Elsie and I sat and talked about what had been said. The subject held a strange fascination for me, despite my avowed unbelief.

After that, Max Lovel came to see us often. From the first I saw that there was a mutual attraction between him and Elsie. And I was satisfied that it was so. I had perfect faith in him, and though it wrung my heart to think of letting her go, I knew of no one to whom I would more gladly give her up.

"You are not to think of it as letting her go," he said to me. "But that you are gaining a brother. I will try to be a true brother to you, Margaret, and if I am, you lose nothing, and gain something."

Spring came, and with it the war that changed everything. Max felt that he was needed. The mighty, appealing voice of his country thrilled him like a trumpet-peal.

I knew how it would be from the first. I know Elsie foresaw, too, though she said nothing to me about it. But I could tell it by the white look in her face.

So when he asked us if we did not think duty called him, I was not surprised. Elsie grew white for a moment, and then I saw her shut her lips tightly together, as if to keep back any words of remonstrance that might rise. Then, after a moment, she said:

"If you want to go, I will not keep you back."

Then I got up quietly and stole away, and left them there alone.

The months went by.

We had frequent letters from him. We learned to look and wait for letter-day as if all other days were of but little account. Oh, those long, lonesome days! How many thousands of women, North and South, waited for letters from those they missed so much. And how many waited for the letters that never came!

And they are waiting still!

But some time the message will come, and then! Oh, waiting hearts, wait on a little longer!

One afternoon we were sitting on the porch. We had been talking of Max. I say we had been, for at the time this singular impression of which I am about to tell you came to me, we were not talking on any subject. We had been thinking our own thoughts for some time and no word had been uttered between us.

Suddenly a strange sensation came over me. I cannot describe it to you. It was like being away from your own self—as if you had lost your individuality for the time, and were part of everything. I seemed to be near Max. I could not see him, but I felt that he was somewhere near, and in trouble. The impression was wonderfully vivid. It took possession of me instantly, and I could not rid my mind of it.

I looked at Elsie. She was very pale.

"What is it?" I asked, getting up, and going to her side.

"I don't know," she answered. "I felt as if I were near Max, and heard him cry out, but I could not go to him. I'm afraid something has happened, Margaret. I never felt so before in all my life."

I went away by myself, and tried to rid myself of the idea that something had happened to Max. But I could not. He seemed to be near me all the while. His presence pervaded the room. Have you never felt that a person was watching you, and looked up to meet his gaze?

We sat down to tea together, but neither of us felt like talking or eating. Then we went into the sitting-room. We sat down without lighting the lamp, and nothing was said. I was too busy with our foreboding thoughts to care to talk.

I don't know how long we had been sitting there, when I heard a voice of Max Lovel as distinctly as ever I heard it in my life—sounding sharp and full of keen, intense pain.

"Elsie! Elsie!" it called, as if he wanted her to come to him. I looked at her. She was white as death.

"You heard it?" she cried. "He is here, I have felt him near me all the afternoon. Lis ten!"

Again we heard the voice. This time he was calling me. "Sister Margaret," he cried, appealingly.

"Oh, Max! Max! where are you?" Elsie cried.

A soft wind rustled the curtains at the open windows. I raised my eyes from the floor, where I had dropped them while listening intently for a repetition of the words we had heard, and saw in the further corner of the room, like a shadow made out of a shadow, the form of Max Lovel. It was like a vapor that had gathered itself into the shape and semblance of a man, but distinct as anything could be, despite its seeming lack of substance.

And as we watched it, with white faces, we saw it lift its hands and put them on its breast, where there was a ghastly crimson stain, and then—while the wind sighed softly through the room, and rustled the leaves outside the window, the shadow seemed to melt away into the darker shadow out of which it had grown, and was gone.

"Max is dead!" Elsie cried, and sunk down to the floor in a dead faint.

Three days afterward a letter came to us from Virginia. And Max was dead. He had been shot at Fair Oaks, at one o'clock on the afternoon of that day when we saw him and heard him speak. He had died just after dark, and his last words had been "Elsie" and "Sister Margaret."

That is all I have to tell. What it was we saw, I do not know. I cannot tell. But we saw something, and if it was not the spirit of Max Lovel, I ask you, what was it?

Foul Play.

BY HENRI MONTAUM.

It has been said before, but is as true now as ever it was, that a man may force, steal, kill, or commit any manner of crime, and never be found out; but there is one thing he can never hope to conceal—he cannot discover gold and keep the discovery secret.

And it was so my pal, Ned Stevens, and myself found it, when one day we happened to pull up an alder-bush in Blue Devil Canon (I only give Montana nomenclature, I don't pretend to explain it), and found a glittering yellow speck among its roots. We at once staked out our claim and went to work; but in twenty-four hours there were four other men at work near us, and in three days a whole city of pine huts, tents and workshops had sprung up around us, inhabited by as thriving a population of jail-birds and gamblers and roughs and blacklegs, with now and then a true lad or two, as ever a common "lust for gold" has drawn together.

And there was gold there, though everybody didn't find it. Stevens and I had struck a very fair kind of lode, four feet wide at the start, and panning out much better than the average. And there were men about us with still better luck than ours, though the majority didn't do over well.

But there was a pair—as strangely an assorted couple as ever I knew, who certainly did have wonderful luck from the very first. These two were Surly Bill, a sullen, cross-grained, ill-conditioned fellow, well-known down at the Bender Gulch as a compound of ruffian and coward, and a young fellow named Davis, a man evidently bred a gentleman, educated and refined, but by some strange freak of circumstances brought among men and scenes plainly repugnant to his tastes and habits.

Two things about him, however, won the immediate respect of his fellow-citizens of Blue Devil Canon—his pluck and his luck. No danger or labor or hardship seemed to daunt him, and his determination was constantly rewarded by a greater amount of success than fell to any man in the camp. It always seemed to me that he entertained no great degree of affection for his partner, but Surly Bill evidently appreciated the advantages of sharing with a lucky man, and Davis, for some reason or other, did not think he could fairly dissolve the partnership.

Blue Devil Canon was to all intents and purposes a healthy enough locality, yet it was not long before a disease broke out among us, not uncommon in mining districts, yet one

which always creates a panic there, viz., *thieving*. Almost every morning somebody or other awoke to find his pile diminished or gone entirely. Saturday night Stook Edwards and his pal, two very respectable fellows, were in cleaned out entirely, and Sunday morning, on broad daylight, two others returning from the regular Sunday service (mixed drinks and Derringers) in the bar-room of the "Heavenly Home," found that their earthly all had been coolly appropriated by their partner, an ex-murderer from Sacramento, who had been left to watch it, and who, in spite of the quick pursuit of a band of mounted volunteers, got off safely with his booty.

Men began to sowl dangerously, and talk of lynch law. They could stand murder and fighting and all that sort of thing. Pistol balls and bowie-knives might be showered about in the community with any amount of liberality, and they complained not; a little excitement now and then was healthy and needful. But when it came to being robbed of what it was the hardest kind of work to acquire, then the public mind began to grow indignant, and strove to concentrate its powers upon the problem of finding some way of putting a stop to this.

Young Davis was one of the first to make an open stir in the matter. That very Sunday, after dinner, when most of the camp was gathered together in one spot, he suddenly jumped upon an old wheelbarrow that had retired from active service, and called for attention. His speech was short, but to the point.

"My friends," he cried, in a ringing voice, "maybe there are men here something like myself, that don't care to work like Government mules for the benefit of other men not one-tenth as honest and ten times as lazy as they are. We can't work days unless we sleep nights, and we can't sleep nights if we're got to sit up and hug our gold-dust to keep it from the thieves. Things have come to that pass where something's got to be done, and I, for one, am ready to help to do it."

There was a murmur of universal approval when Davis finished, and a voice shouted out above the rest:

"The young fellow is right. We'll hang the first thief caught, and we won't stop to try him either."

A vigilance committee was chosen on the spot, thieving was denounced as the worst crime in the calendar, and hanging was to be its punishment.

Poor Davis! Little did he think that the very first man whose neck would be in danger under this new dispensation would be one who not only robbed but murdered Davis himself. Things went on quietly for two nights in succession; then all at once in the dead of night Stevens and I, whose tent was directly adjoining that of Surly Bill and Davis, were aroused by a pistol shot and in a minute Bill himself came running into the tent, his face all covered with blood, crying out that they had been robbed and he believed his partner was done for. We hurried out but there were no signs anywhere of the thief. Inside the tent was a verification of the terrible truth of Bill's story.

By the dim light of the lantern hanging on the tent-pole we saw poor Davis' body lying on his blanket yet in a half-erect position and looking not so much like a dead man as one first starting from sleep. Closer examination showed that he was lying in a pool of his own blood, blood which had flowed from several frightful knife wounds in his side, in one of which a large bowie-knife still remained—afterward ascertained to be the murdered man's own weapon. A strange part of it was that the arms were extended and the stiffened hands clutched fast an old mining boot, an ordinary boot such as might have belonged to half the men in the camp, so that it furnished no clue at all to the murderer. So tightly though was the hold upon this boot that it was found impossible to free it without prying or cutting, so it was left where it was. A careful search through the camp revealed no mate to it anywhere. The bag of gold-dust, the entire result of their month's work, and which had been buried under the blanket on which the men slept, was gone. Surly Bill's story was very simple. He slept soundly and had known nothing at all of the matter until suddenly awakened by some one stepping on his leg. Opening his eyes he saw a man making for the door. He shouted at him and sprang to his feet, when the thief turned and shot at him once, then disappeared. The ball had inflicted a severe flesh wound across his left temple and seemed to stun him a bit. When he got to the tent entrance nobody was to be seen. He had noticed that the thief limped a little, but we accounted for this by the fact that he had but one boot on. This was the whole story so far as Bill knew anything about it. His wound did not prevent his being up and about at once.

The dead man's partner took entire charge of the burial. He had a kind of a weakness for the young fellow, he said, and would rather do it all himself. So just at twilight the next day he took the body in his arms and carried it to the trench where only the day before Davis himself had been digging, and then he covered it with earth. There was neither sermon preached nor prayer said. Funeral demonstrations were held to be but sickly sentiment in those days in Blue Devil Canon.

Altogether the whole affair was a mystery. For a whole twenty-four hours it was talked over and wondered at in the camp; there were efforts made to discover the murderer and threats of dire vengeance if he should be found; but he was not found, and quickly men resumed their own labors and forgot all about it.

But there was one tent in which the matter was not so entirely dropped. Stevens and I, unknown to each other, had each our suspicions as to the perpetrator of the crime from the first. It was not until a week later that we happened to speak of them, however. Stevens was the first to open his lips about it. "Chum," said he, all at once one night when we were by ourselves, "do you know I can't help thinking Surly Bill knows more about that matter than he tells?"

"Just the notion that has been running in my head all the week," answered I. Then came the mutual question, "What makes you think so?" and on comparing notes we settled upon the following facts:

In the first place the wound Bill received was not deep enough to have stunned him much. It seemed incredible that the murderer should have been within six feet of him and yet have vanished so easily and completely. Bill, we well knew, was possessed of a revolver which he always carried in his belt; and it would seem, might at least have got a shot at the intruder.

Again, this revolver we had not seen since the murder. Why was this?

Still again, ever since that memorable night, Bill, instead of his ordinary leather boots which corresponded, as far as might be remembered, to that found in the dead man's grasp, had worn around an old pair of rubber boots which he had used previously only

in wet weather. All of these, of course, might be unimportant facts in themselves, but taken together, they served greatly to strengthen our suspicions originally started in our minds by two more important facts. Stevens, when we entered the scene of the murder that night, had gone straight to poor Davis' body. Strange to say, though according to Bill's story it would seem the murder must have been committed but a moment before, the body was quite cold and life must have been quite extinct. Stevens thought, scarcely less than half an hour. And I, on my part, in afterward examining the wound on Bill's temple, found that it began at the cheek-bone and ran directly upward. Later, searching carefully by myself, I discovered a bullet-hole in the canvas overhead but near the stone fire-place in the rear of the tent. To have fired that shot the thief must have been on the ground in the back part of the tent and with our surly friend standing directly over him. This startling conclusion was inevitable.

What now was to be done? We had but to breathe our suspicions to the fence, reckless men around us, and even upon the little evidence we had to show, Surly Bill would have been convicted and hung in half an hour. But to our minds, anxious though we were to see young Davis avenged, that evidence was not quite sufficient, and was after all entirely unconvincing. Could we get any more evidence? If we could but discover the revolver or the other boot, or maybe the stolen treasure itself, what story might they not relate? Sooner than we thought, accident was to give us the desired clue.

A night or two after this, late in the evening, I chanced to pass Surly Bill's tent door on my way to bed, when the sound of his voice within arrested my steps. To whom could he be talking at this time of night? I would see; and quite in accordance with camp etiquette, I lifted the tent-flap and went in.

Bill lay there asleep on his blanket, muttering hoarsely to himself in uneasy slumber. I caught a word or two that made me draw nearer. "So they want to know where I hid the plunder, do they, pard?" were the first connected words that rewarded my attention.

"Wall, I'll allow you'll never tell. You'll keep it for me, you will. You'll jest lay there and hold on to it till their crack o' doom if I don't come back for it. I'll jest throw in that yere boot so you'll hev the pair of 'em."

Then, as if roused by some troubling thought, he turned uneasily and opened his eyes, and staring around, met my gaze fixed searchingly upon him. He looked scared for an instant, then asked peevishly what I was doing there.

"I've been listening to a little story you've been telling me, Bill Sandford."

He started up with an oath. "I've told you nothing," he cried, fiercely, "and I never will!" and he fell back again on his blanket.

"But I'll tell you something," I went on mercilessly. "You murdered Davis."

"It's a lie!" he yelled, once more starting up and feeling for his revolver.

"You need not look for your pistol," I said. "You threw that into the ditch with his body."

He groaned and hid his face in the blanket. "Along with the gold and the old boot," I went on, relentlessly. "The wound in your temple you made yourself, to deceive us."

"That's a lie," cried he, weakly betraying himself. "The turned thing dropped and went off of itself."

"Then you own up?"

He was silent a moment, then burst forth, sobbing like a baby:

"Yes, it's all true enough. I did do it, but I swear I gave all the money a hundred times over of I hadn't a-done it. He's haunted me night and day ever since. But you won't blow on me, will yer? For the love of God, don't tell them fellers out thar. They'd string me up in no time."

The cowardly abjectness of the wretch was pitiful to see.

"Get up," I said, giving him a push with my foot. "Saddle your mule, and get out of this instant. I give you just an hour's start, and you had better make the most of it."

Without a word he went out and mounted his mule, and stole out of the camp, and I have never seen or heard of him since.

I went at once to Stevens and told him what I had discovered and done. Mutually we agreed, for certain reasons, to keep the thing to ourselves. In less than a month after that the diggings were entirely cleaned out, and Blue Devil Canon straightway became as silent and deserted as though man had never violated its sacred stillness.

Ned and I were of the very last; and when, after going a short distance away and halting a couple of nights, we felt sure all had been damped, we returned secretly, and in the moonlight shadows carefully and reverently we dug up poor Davis' body. Strange creature of the murderer, to hide the treasure in the grave of the man he had robbed! For, just under the body, where no living man would have thought to look, we found them all; the revolver, all rusty with blood and with one of its chambers empty, the mate to the boot in the dead man's grasp, and within this latter the bag of gold-dust. But pray do not think we had thus stolen back in secret in order to secure the gold for ourselves. Davis and I had some talks together before his death, and in one of them he had tenderly alluded to a wife and child whom he had left behind him in a little Massachusetts village. It was for her we had saved the gold from the rest of the camp, and to her it was faithfully sent.

There was something like six thousand dollars' worth in all; and years after, going back to New England once more, I was glad to learn upon inquiry that the money had safely reached one who not only greatly needed, but richly deserved it.

Running the Gantlet.

BY GEORGE W. BROWNE.

AROUND our camp-fire that night, after talking over my grizzly adventure to satisfaction, old Killbuck whistled away the time in telling over some of his thrilling encounters and hair-breadth escapes from wild beasts and wilder savages that he had met with in his adventurous life.

Among those that he told was the following: "Es I war sayin', thar war sum hard doin's thet season, and menny uv the boys lost their hair by the cussid red-skins, who seemed to be on the rampage. I member well thet me an' Gray Luke an' young Brad Bunker, Wild Gray, as we used to call him, war out on Pawnee Fork, haulin' in the beaver right smart. But we knowed thet red-skins war knockin' 'bout, so we had to be mighty keeful how we showed ourselves. However, we got 'long slick fur a spell, when, suddintly, thar kem sum uv the tallest kind uv fightin' to do.

"One mornin', leavin' Luke at camp, me

an' Brad started out to git sum meat. After goin' up the ravine sum ways, we see'd sum goats* near a bluff, a short distance ahead. I war tryin' to git within shot, when I see'd the critters turn back thar heads an' jump right away fur me. 'Look out, Brad!' I shouts, 'hyar's red-skins a-comin'!' an' I starts to make back tracks fur the camp. But Brad, seein' the goats runnin' up to him, an' not bein' up to Injun ways, blazed away at the first an' knocked him over. Jest then, a score uv Pawnees showed thar heads 'bove the bluff, an' kem a-screechin' upon us. Lookin' back, I see'd Brad rammin' a ball down his gun like mad, an' the red-skins flingin' their arrows at him right smart, I tell you.

"'Hurraw, Brad, mind yer hair!' I sung out, an' ups old Snap, and et it have, at the fust Injun, who hit the dust right hansom, I bet. Purty soon Brad gits his ball down, blazes away, an' drops another. Then we put down through the bushes fur camp.

"Brad an' I hadn't gone more nor ten steps when the bushes parted ahead uv us, and more red-skins rode out upon us; an' I see'd thet we war surrounded on every side by the varmints, most uv 'em mounted, an' the way they kem yellin' upon us whid make me feel a leetle skeery 'bout his ha'r. Es me an' Brad warn't goin' to let the red cusses hev our top-knots fur nothin', we went fur 'em; but thar war too menny fur us, an' the fust I knowed, they hed me down, an' I war a pris'n'r. But, somehow, Brad managed to git through 'em, an' out 'pon the clearin'; then he started fur a bit uv timber, a leetle ways off. The red-skins gave a terrible yell, an' all started fur Brad, 'cep'tin' two, thet stopped to keep me till the rest c'd ketch Brad.

"At the fust start, the red-skins tried to shoot Brad, but purty soon I see'd they hed given up the idee, an' thet they wanted to ketch him alive. 'Y course, Brad stood no chance uv runnin' away from 'em, as they war mounted; but still, I knowed thet they c'd n't git him in a minnit, fur he c'd run the fustest uv enny chap I ever see'd, an' nothin' suited him better.

"Es the last red-skin in pursuit of Brad went out uv sight, I turned to my kapturs, who hed also been watchin' the race. Ef I hed only hed my hands free, them two varmints would hev hed to stoo'd round; but work an' twist my best, I could n't git free. So I give up all hope in thet direction, thinkin' thet I war a goner; and wonderin' what hed become of Luke, who I hed n't thought uv till thet minnit. I soon come to the conclusion, however, thet the red-skins must hev rubbed him out; when suddintly the bushes parted, an' he, who I hed jest made uv the war, came on, rushed, like a flash, toward the two red-skins. In an instant one uv 'em bit the dust, and the next minnit Luke closed in with the other, an' after a hard tussle thet red skin went under, too. Then, after wipin' his knife on the ground, Luke cut me free, an' without a word we dashed back inter the bushes, to git out of the way afore the red-skins thet war arter Brad sh'd git back.

"I spects them ar' red-skins war awful mad when they got back with Brad, an' found thet two warriors dead an' me gone. But they c'd n't help thet selves; though ef it hedn't bin fur keepin' him fur the torture, they w'd hev kilt Brad on the spot. However, es Luke an' I kept ourselves out uv the way, thet the varmints had to put up with what they hed got.

"When we knowed thet the way was clear, Luke an' I left our hidin'-place an' follered clus upon the red-skins, for we hed no idee uv lettin' them do as they war a mind to with Brad, without tryin' to help him. Ef thar hed bin a single chance for us when they got back to the ravine, whar Luke hed got me away, as sh'd hev tried it. But thar was none. The red cusses war too menny fur us; an' we knowed thet the only chance uv our lives war by stratagem. So we follered upon thar trail, hopin' thet sumthin' might turn up to help us git Brad out of his fix.

"The red-skins, arter trampin' on fur 'bout an hour, halted; when purty soon they war j'ined by another party, nearly es large es their own. Luke an' I crept up through the bushes within rifle-shot, an' then waited to see what the varmints war goin' to do. But we war not kept waitin' long, afore we see'd thet they war hatchin' up sum deviltry to inflot on Brad. An' purty soon we see'd 'em formin' themselves inter two rows, in the center uv the clearin', whar they hed halted. Then we knowed thet they war goin' to make Brad run the knife gantlet.

"Bimeby Brad was led for'ard fur the race. All the red-skins, 'cep'tin' three or four, hed formed themselves inter two lines, standin' 'bout three feet apart, faces to faces. Thar war 'bout forty uv the varmints, an' each one was armed with his long knife, hid back ever his head. I tell ye, boys, thet made a mighty narrer path fur a feller to go through, an' with them knives a-clashin' round his head, he stood ten chances to one uv goin' under. But I knowed thet ef anny person c'd do it, Brad Bunker c'd. So, knowin' that they c'd n't help him, me an' Luke waited patiently fur thet run fur life to commence. But we swore thet ef they sh'd kilt Brad, thet more than one red-skin w'd git his flint flint.

"My stars! didn't Brad do sum tall work when he went down 'tween them lines uv death! One minnit he w'd seem to be crawlin' upon the ground, an' the next he w'd leap inter the air, knockin' up the arms uv sum uv the varmints, an' kickin' other heels over head; then down upon the yearth, an' ag'in springin' up, he w'd dart from one side to the other, skillfully eludin' every blow the cussid varmints 'tempted to make. Thus, in thet way, Brad rushed on till the last red-skin was passed, an' then, with a triumphant whoop, he put fur the timber es fast es his legs c'd carry him.

"Ye hed better believe, boys, thet 'em ar' red-skins war a mad set when they see'd Brad clear 'em and put fur the timber. I don't s'pose the critters hed any idee thet Brad w'd cum out uv the race alive, an' so his escape took 'em so completely by surprise thet, before they c'd git their guns an' mount their bosses, he hed a start on 'em, thet me an' Luke knowed w'd enable him to clear 'em.

"The red-skins all j'ined in pursuit uv Brad, 'cep'tin' three, who staid behind to see to things, an' one thet was wounded, so thet he c'd n't go. So the minnit thet Luke an' I knowed the others war out uv hearin', we rushed out on 'em three, an' afore they knowed what war up, we'd fixed 'em. Then, takin' our horses an' pack-mules, thet the varmints had stolen from 'em, we pickin' up what war worth carryin' off, we left.

"The next mornin' we run across Brad, who hed managed to git away from the red-skins without much trouble; but he war purty sore an' stiff. Howsnever, me an' Luke fixed him up slick, an' he cum round all right. But as the place was gittin' too hot fur us, we quit the diggin's at onct."

* Meaning antelope.